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A Prayer For Me As Well:

Friendship and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*

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A Prayer For Me As Well:

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by

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Teacher, counselor, family, friend, and moral support.

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Friendship and Philosophy in Plato's *Phaedrus*

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014
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Although Plato's views on Friendship, or *philia,* are almost always found embedded in discussions of erotic love, I argue that these views nevertheless constitute a clear and compelling picture of the nature and value of the best kinds of friendship. Moreover, I suggest that these views on friendship present us with a surprising insight into Plato's overall conception of the practice of philosophy, as a personal process of striving for knowledge at the center of the best human life. To tease out these views on *philia*, I begin with a close reading of Plato's *Phaedrus.* As many have noted, this dialogue appears at first to be strangely disunified: its first half is concerned primarily with giving an account of erotic love, while its second half is devoted to a discussion of the nature and value of rhetoric. I begin by examining the theory of erotic love presented by Socrates in the 'palinode' at the center of the *Phaedrus*, and arguing that we can begin to see a theory of *philia* emerging from this account. I then argue that a central element of this theory of *philia*, as presented in the palinode to love, provides us with a link to the later discussion of rhetoric, and a unifying theme for the *Phaedrus* as a whole: the knowledge of souls. With this unifying theme in hand, I return to the account of *philia,* and eros, in the first half of the *Phaedrus* and, in light of this topic, draw further conclusions about Plato's views of the importance of *philia,* and eros, to philosophy.

Contents

Introduction: The Philosophy of Friendship in Plato

Discussions of the philosophy of friendship almost always begin with Aristotle. Whether they intend to agree with him or not, most philosophers writing on friendship feel the need to take Aristotle's theory into account, as the first fully articulated theory of friendship in the western tradition, and to orient their own positions relative to his. Very few philosophers of friendship, however, feel obliged to address Plato's views. Those who do seem quite comfortable dismissing his theory of friendship as a half-formed subsidiary to his theory of erotic love, articulated poorly and with little commitment in the aporetic *Lysis*, and largely irrelevant to his vision of philosophy and of the good life on the whole.[1] I would like to argue that this perception of Plato is wrong. While Plato's views on friendship, or *philia,* are almost invariably found embedded in discussions of erotic love, I would nevertheless like to argue that these views constitute a clear and compelling picture of the value of friendship, of the best sort, in both our ordinary and philosophical lives. Moreover, I would like to suggest that these views of friendship present us with a somewhat surprising insight into Plato's overall conception of the practice of philosophy, as a personal process of striving for knowledge at the center of the best human life.

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[1] See, e.g. Julia Annas. "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism." *Mind*, New Series, 86. 344 (Oct. 1977): 532-554. Hereafter, 'Annas.'

Annas does argue, however, and many seem to accept, that the aporetic 'problems' posed by Plato in the *Lysis* provide an important context for Aristotle's later account; See e.g. Jennifer Whiting. "The Nicomachean Account of Philia." *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. Richard Kraut. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.) 276-304. Hereafter, 'Whiting.'

In trying to tease out these views on *philia*, I would like to begin with a close reading of Plato's *Phaedrus.* As many have noted, this dialogue appears at first glance to be strangely disunified: its first half is concerned primarily with giving an account of erotic love, while its second half is devoted almost entirely to a discussion of the nature and value of rhetoric. I would like to begin by examining the theory of erotic love presented by Socrates in the 'palinode' at the center of the *Phaedrus*, and arguing that we can begin to see a theory of *philia* emerging from this account. I would then like to argue that a central element of this theory of *philia*, as presented in the palinode to love, provides us with a link to the later discussion of rhetoric, and a unifying theme for the *Phaedrus* as a whole, namely, the knowledge of souls. With this unifying theme in hand, we can then turn back to the account of *philia* and eros in the first half of the *Phaedrus* and, in light of this topic, draw further conclusions about Plato's views of the importance of *philia,* and eros, to philosophy.

I. Love and the Nature of the Soul

Socrates' palinode to love in the *Phaedrus* begins rather strangely with a defense of madness. Eros has been accused, in the preceding speeches criticizing love, of being a kind of madness, a madness which makes its victims lose their self-control and grip on reason, forgetting their own best interests and behaving erratically, even violently, towards both their beloved and others. Rather than rejecting this criticism outright, Socrates concedes that love is a kind of madness, but maintains that the important question is not this, but rather *what* kind of madness it is. While some kinds of madness are admittedly harmful, he argues, others can be extremely beneficial, and even "god-sent."[2] Such beneficial kinds of madness, like prophetic trances and poetic inspiration, enable those whom they have "driven out of their minds"[3] to achieve things far beyond what they are capable of when sane or "in control of themselves."[4] That love is a kind of madness, then, will stand as a meaningful criticism only if it isn't a madness of such a beneficial kind. Socrates thus proposes to argue that love is a beneficial madness of just this sort. Love, he maintains, though it is a kind of madness, is a 'divine' kind of madness "sent by the gods as a benefit to a lover and his boy,"[5] and to all of us "to ensure our greatest good fortune."[6]

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[2] Plato. *Phaedrus*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper.(Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 245b2. Hereafter '*Phaedrus*.'

[3] *Phaedrus* 245a7.

[4] *Phaedrus* 244b4.

[5] *Phaedrus* 245b7.

[6] *Phaedrus* 245b8-c1.

Already here, then, we are beginning to see what looks like a departure from the most familiar reading of the 'ascent of love' as outlined by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. To defend love we must not only show that it is of great benefit to the lover, but, apparently, that it is of *equally* great benefit to the beloved. Diotima's account in the *Symposium* provides us with only the faintest of hints of how such a defense might be accomplished. In the palinode, however, to give such a defense is Socrates' stated aim. And the picture of eros which he paints for us here begins not with a depiction of what the lover hopes to gain from his relationship with the beloved, as Diotima's account arguably does,[7] but with an abstract account of the nature of the human soul. Having outlined several ways in which a madness can be "god-sent"[8] and beneficial, and declared his intention to defend love in this way, Socrates turns abruptly to a theory of the nature of the soul. If we are to defend love as a kind of divine and beneficial madness, he maintains, "we must first understand the truth about the nature of the soul, divine or human.... Here begins the proof."[9] But why should an account of the nature of the soul play such a central role in our our defense of love? It seems that a significant part of Socrates' answer will ultimately be that such an understanding of the nature of our souls is among the greatest benefits which love has to offer us, both in the role of lover and in the role of beloved. The benefits love offers to each party to an erotic relationship, then,

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[7] Plato. *Symposium*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 206a-b. Hereafter '*Symposium*.'

[8] *Phaedrus* 245b2.

[9] *Phaedrus* 245c1-2.

are not differentiated in the way one might expect in traditional Greek homosexual practice, with the lover receiving certain benefits in exchange for very different benefits he offers the beloved. Rather, the beloved and the lover both benefit from the relationship in what is essentially the same way, although the historical development of the relationship is somewhat different for the beloved than the lover. Nevertheless, if the benefit to be expected by the beloved is the *same* as that accruing to the lover, then the claim that such a relationship provides the greatest benefit to *both* parties becomes much more straightforward to defend.

But to say all of this gets ahead of our argument. To establish these points, we need first to examine the account Socrates offers of the nature of the soul. The soul, first of all, is immortal.[10] As such, it pre-exists our birth into this world, in an un-embodied form. To accurately describe the nature of this un-embodied soul, however, would be nearly impossible, "a task for a god in every way,"[11] and so, Socrates suggests, we should attempt instead only to "say what it is like,"[12] and illuminate its nature by analogy, since to do this "is humanly possible, and takes less time."[13] The account that he offers us, then, is an elaborate analogical myth, depicting the nature not only of the human soul, but of "all soul,"[14] godly, human, and otherwise. Every soul, he argues, is like a chariot-

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[10] *Phaedrus* 245c3.

[11] *Phaedrus* 246a3-4.

[12] *Phaedrus* 246a4.

[13] *Phaedrus* 246a2-4.

[14] *Phaedrus* 246b2.

team, composed of a charioteer and two horses, which are naturally and inseparably bound together into a single being, and held aloft in heaven by wings which spring from "every part" of it.[15] The souls of the gods and of all other beings share this basic structure, and the central difference between the souls of the gods and those of other beings is in the natural character of the horses which the charioteer drives. In the souls of the gods both horses are naturally good and well-behaved, obedient to their charioteer and well-matched to one another. In the souls of other beings, however, only one of the horses is like those of the gods, while the other is naturally ill-tempered and unruly, prone to disobey the charioteer and undermine the efforts of its teammate. It follows that while the souls of the gods move themselves through heaven with a natural ease and precision, "chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painful and difficult business,"[16] even in this un-embodied form. Our un-embodied souls are nevertheless able to travel with the gods through the universe in an orderly procession, helping them to oversee the workings of the inanimate world.[17] As each god has his own place in this heavenly procession, so does each soul, following in the ranks arrayed under the command of one of the gods as he tends to those parts of the universe which are his special concern. These un-embodied souls, both gods and otherwise, take their nourishment from the contemplation of what lies beyond the heavens which they oversee: the eternal and unchanging reality of "being

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[15] *Phaedrus* 246a5-6 & 251b7-8.

[16] *Phaedrus* 246b4-5.

[17] *Phaedrus* 246b7-c1 & 246e5-247a1.

that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge."[18] Their sustenance, then, is the knowledge they gain from this vision of true reality, which can only be taken in by "intelligence, the soul's steersman,"[19] that is, by the chariot driver. The divine procession of souls travels regularly up to the edge of the heavens to engage in this "banquet"[20] of knowledge, and "when the soul has seen all the things that are as they are and feasted on them, it sinks back inside heaven and goes home."[21]

However, this journey to the edge of heaven to feast on knowledge is a very different undertaking for the gods than for the souls of other sorts of beings, who are hindered in all of their motions by the unruliness of their bad horse. The way up to the edge of heaven is a steep and difficult incline, and while the gods navigate this challenge easily, with their skillful charioteers and disciplined horses, the rest of the souls struggle badly to reach the top and be able to see the real beings. The most successful souls, who have managed to make themselves most like the gods, are able to follow them close to the rim of heaven, and peer over the edge to see all of the real things beyond. In doing this, however, they are constantly distracted by the effort required to keep their horses under control, and so the view that they have is less perfect than that achieved by the gods. Other souls rise up and sink down erratically as their horses pull in different

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[18] *Phaedrus* 247c7-d1.

[19] *Phaedrus* 247d1.

[20] *Phaedrus* 247b1.

[21] *Phaedrus* 247e2-2-4.

directions, affording brief views of only some of the real things passing by.[22] Still others are unable to reach the edge at all, struggling violently with themselves and others in a chaotic scramble to climb higher, but ultimately having to return to heaven unnourished by reality, and sustained only by "their own opinions."[23] Since the wings of the soul are nourished by the "plain where truth stands,"[24] those who fail to reach the top fail to nourish their wings, and "many souls are crippled by the incompetence of the drivers, and many wings break much of their plumage"[25] in the unsuccessful struggle to climb up. In this weakened state, the souls which return to heaven without having fed on reality are left vulnerable, and if any one of them "by some accident takes on a burden of forgetfulness and wrongdoing, then it is weighed down, sheds its wings, and falls to earth."[26] Each soul in its first life is born into the body of a human being, with the souls who have seen more of reality born into those with better natural dispositions, while those who have seen less are born into those with less desirable natural characters. A soul who has seen the most will be born into someone disposed to become "a lover of wisdom or of beauty, or who will be cultivated in the arts and prone to erotic love,"[27] while a soul

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[22] The real things do not themselves move, rather, the rim of heaven spins, carrying the gods and successful souls past each of the real things successively (see *Phaedrus* 247c1-e4).

[23] *Phaedrus* 248b5.

[24] *Phaedrus* 248b6.

[25] *Phaedrus* 248b2-3.

[26] *Phaedrus* 248c7-d1.

[27] *Phaedrus* 248d3-4.

who has seen the least will be born into someone with the disposition of a tyrant.[28] But all such human souls will at some point have seen something of the truth outside heaven, "since a human being must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity,"[29] and we gain this ability only through "the recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god."[30]

All of our souls, then, have a natural desire to return to their original place in heaven, traveling with the gods. But to do so is extremely difficult. At the end of its mortal life, each soul is judged for its behavior while embodied, and receives rewards or punishments in the afterlife accordingly. But it is not able to return to its place with the gods in this afterlife, until it has regrown its wings. And to do this ordinarily takes a very long time, at least ten lifetimes, or ten-thousand years. After a thousand years in the afterlife, each soul chooses another life to be born into on earth, and here each has a chance to change who it will be. The souls which had originally been born into one type of human being may choose to be born into a better or worse type, or even to be born into a non-human animal, if they prefer that sort of life to a human one. With each passing lifetime, then, each soul has a chance to better or worsen its condition, both in terms of the quality of the character with which it is born, and the choices it goes on to make during its lifetime.

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[28] *Phaedrus* 248e5.

[29] *Phaedrus* 249b6-c2.

[30] *Phaedrus* 249c3.

And one of the most crucial of these choices, Plato argues, is the way in which we choose to respond to love, that is, to eros. Eros, he explains is that "kind of madness... which someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty..."[31]

> ...then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up, but is unable to do so, and he gazes aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below – and that is what brings on him the charge that he has gone mad. This is the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone who has it or is connected to it, and when someone who loves beautiful boys is touched by this madness he is called a lover.[32]

Notice, then, that this description of eros does not seem to be restricted to those 'who love beautiful boys,' rather, the love of beautiful boys is plausibly interpreted as only one kind of such eros, that is, the kind with which we are most concerned here. This description of eros, then, seems entirely compatible with the many instances in which Plato speaks of eros as directed not only at persons, but at wisdom, the Forms, philosophy, and many other things.[33] However, the focus in the palinode is not on eros in this general sense, but rather that specific sort of eros which is directed toward persons. Furthermore, beauty itself is not the *object* of this kind of eros, but rather the spark, so to speak, which touches it off.

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[31] *Phaedrus* 249d4-5.

[32] *Phaedrus* 249d5-e4.

[33] See, e.g., Plato. *Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C Reeve. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) VI.490a7-b9, VI.499b4-c2, & VI.501d1. Hereafter '*Republic*'; Plato. *Gorgias*. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 481d2-6; *Symposium* 210d1-211d1.

II. The Lover Falls in Love

The process of falling in love, Plato argues, begins with the violent awe inspired in us by an encounter with physical beauty, but this is only the beginning of such eros, and a love which never moved beyond this stage would be a relatively shallow and unfruitful one. The objects which all human souls most naturally admire, he argues, are those perfectly real beings which all of us encountered at some time before our births. We must all remember these perfect beings to some extent or another, insofar as we are capable of understanding language.[34] Our recollection of these beings, however, is obscure and imperfect, and many of us have no conscious awareness of this recollection at all. Some of us, moreover, are less able to recollect these perfect beings than others, depending upon the experiences which our souls have had in the time before our births and since. Those who have seen more of reality, and who have done more to preserve their memories of what they did see, are better able to recall the nature of these perfect beings, recollecting them with both greater ease and greater clarity.[35] Some people, then, are easily reminded of these perfect beings by an encounter with "their images down here,"[36] while others are extremely difficult to move towards such a recollection. Beauty, however, enjoys a special status as a potential object of such recollection. The "likenesses"[37] which we encounter here on earth of the majority of perfect beings, such as

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[34] See above p. 9.

[35] *Phaedrus* 249e4-250a6.

[36] *Phaedrus* 250b2-3.

[37] *Phaedrus* 250b5.

wisdom[38] or justice, are not directly observable through our physical senses, but must to some extent be inferred from that which we immediately perceive.[39] The 'likenesses' of beauty, on the other hand, can be directly perceived through our senses, and, moreover, through "the clearest of our senses,"[40] our sight. Unlike those things which might remind us of the other perfect beings, then, which require some careful attention and work to make out, a perception of beauty in the things 'down here' can come upon us unexpectedly, when we have not at all set out to look for it.

When some among the human souls 'down here,' then, in the course of their embodied human lives, are suddenly confronted with beauty in this way, taken off guard by an encounter with something which more closely resembles its perfect counterpart than any other thing which they are able to directly perceive, they are "startled,"[41] and "beside themselves, and their experience is beyond their comprehension because they cannot fully grasp what they are seeing."[42] Then, as they attempt to make sense of what they are feeling, the course of the eros this encounter has sparked in them may turn several different ways, depending upon how they come to understand and respond to it. Someone who has forgotten much of the real things he saw, or who has obscured his memories of them even further through a life of vice, "is not to be moved abruptly from

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[38] *Phaedrus* 250d3-7.

[39] *Phaedrus* 250b2-5.

[40] *Phaedrus* 250d3.

[41] *Phaedrus* 250a7.

[42] *Phaedrus* 250a8-b1.

here to a vision of Beauty itself when he sees what we call beauty here,"[43] and so he is likely to interpret this powerful experience only as a physical lust or desire. Such a person consequently "surrenders to pleasure and sets out in the manner of a four-footed beast,"[44] pursuing sex without further reflection upon what has happened to him. Someone who is closer to his memories of true beauty, on the other hand, is struck by a mysterious "reverence"[45] for the possessor of this earthly beauty, as the experience reminds him of the things that he "felt at an earlier time,"[46] in the presence of Beauty itself. In the presence of this earthly reflection of beauty, the long-dormant roots of the wings of his soul begin to be nurtured again, as they were by the vision of true beauty in heaven, and "the soul seethes and throbs in this condition.... like a child whose teeth are just starting to grow in,"[47] as it begins to regain its wings. The only relief for this pain is to stay in the presence of the earthly beauty which began the process, and which nourishes the newly sprouting wings of the soul and eases the discomfort of their growth, replacing the maddening frustration of their struggle to grow with pleasure and joy at the soul's revitalization. And so this second sort of lover is desperate to remain near the object of his eros, but is still unsure of what it is that moves him to this desperation, and "this is the experience we humans call love."[48]

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[43] *Phaedrus* 250e3.

[44] *Phaedrus* 250e5-6.

[45] *Phaedrus* 251a5.

[46] *Phaedrus* 251a4.

[47] *Phaedrus* 251b9-10.

[48] *Phaedrus* 252b3.

But an eros which stopped here would still be one which brought little benefit, to either the lover or beloved. Though this unreflective experience of beauty is enough to begin the re-growth of the soul's wings, if the progress of the lover's eros went no further than this, then his soul would remain in this desperate and frustrated state, confused as to how its sudden need could be satisfied. As such a lover's eros draws him closer to the possessor of this beauty, however, while the soul's bad horse advocates that he interpret his need only as a desire for sex, he is "struck by the boy's face, as if by a bolt of lightning,"[49] and "when the charioteer sees that face, his memory is carried back to the real nature of Beauty, and he sees it again where it stands on the sacred pedestal next to Self-control."[50] Awe-struck by this recollection of the perfect beings, the soul pulls up short in its pursuit of the beloved, restraining its bad horse in the realization that physical gratification is not the only thing it really wants. The lover now understands, instead, that his desire to be close to his beloved is caused by the way his beloved reminds him of the perfect beings he saw in heaven, and the way that his beloved's presence makes him feel again the way that he once felt in the presence of those perfect beings, when he was still "pure"[51] and "free of all troubles...and...gazed in rapture at sacred revealed objects that were perfect, and simple, and unshakable and blissful."[52] Understanding his eros in this context, as a need which draws him closer to the 'sacred' world and self which he has

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[49] *Phaedrus* 254b5.

[50] *Phaedrus* 254b5-8.

[51] *Phaedrus* 250c5.

[52] *Phaedrus* 250c2-4.

lost, he is able to resist the pull of the bad horse to convert this desire into a simple physical lust, and to bring the bad horse gradually under control, fighting against its influence and teaching it the discipline to follow the commands of the charioteer. Eventually, when the bad horse in the soul "stops being so insolent"[53] in the face of the lover's resistance to its impulses, and "is humble enough to follow the charioteer's warnings,"[54] the lover is able to guide his soul's response to eros in the way that he now understands to be most appropriate to the cause of these powerful feelings in himself, and "now at last the lover's soul follows its boy in reverence and awe,"[55] without discomforted confusion, or dissension from the bad horse in the soul.

At this point, then, one might still plausibly interpret the object of this eros not as the beloved himself, but the beauty and perfection which the lover is reminded of by him. This changes, however, as the violent attraction which the lover has felt towards the beloved evolves from a unidirectional desire into a continuing relationship between the lover and beloved. Though the initial stage of eros which we have been describing might, one imagines, strike a lover in the presence of any physically beautiful person, physical beauty alone will not be enough to sustain his desire to be near his beloved over time, once he has achieved this insight into what has caused his response to that beauty. Though one might experience an intense desire of this sort for anyone beautiful, one does not necessarily come to love, in any more robust and lasting sense, any or every such

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[53] *Phaedrus* 254e7.

[54] *Phaedrus* 254e9-10.

[55] *Phaedrus* 254e9-10.

person, and something beyond physical beauty alone must explain why this is. And this is because, Plato argues, "everyone chooses his love after his own fashion from among those who are beautiful,"[56] and this choice is not made on the basis of the beloved's physical beauty, but on that of his character.

Although we have been focusing so far primarily upon the differences in character which result from the different experiences which each soul has had, and the different choices it has made, both before and after its birth, we should remember that Plato's analogical myth picks out two distinct ways in which human souls might be differentiated into broad character types, and these two divisions run largely orthogonal to one another. One such division is in terms of the soul's success in achieving a vision of the real beings outside of heaven, and in preserving its memories of what it has seen once it has been born into a life on earth. Where a given soul falls within this division may, Plato argues explicitly, change over time, as each soul chooses how to live its life, and what sort of life to be reborn to, gradually eroding or shoring up the memories it has of the truth. The other division, however, has to do with an aspect of each soul which does not change after its birth into life here on earth: the particular god which that soul had attended in its travels through heaven before it was born. Recall that those souls who were most successful in achieving a vision of the real beings outside heaven were those who were able to make themselves most like the gods, emulating most perfectly the god whom they followed. A soul who will be born into the world with the best sort of character, then,

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[56] *Phaedrus* 252d5-e1.

that of ‘a lover of wisdom or of beauty’ or of an individual ‘cultivated in the arts’ or ‘prone to erotic love,’ will be “one that follows a god most closely, making itself most like that god”[57] during the time before its birth. But which god such a soul emulates in order to make itself most perfect will depend upon which god it follows in the heavenly procession. The path to its greatest perfection, then, may vary from soul to soul, depending upon which god each soul naturally follows, insofar as the division according to quality of character is made within the set of souls attendant upon each god, according to their success in emulating that god, rather than according to which god each soul attends. And this second sort of division among souls, Plato argues, will persist into our lives here on earth, at least insofar as our own forgetfulness and misguided choices fail to obscure it, so that “everyone spends his life honoring the god in whose chorus he danced, and emulates that god in every way he can, so long as he remains undefiled.”[58]

When a lover turns from the immediate disorientation of an encounter with physical beauty, Plato argues, to the process of pursuing a lasting love with one among those who possess such beauty, it is this second aspect of character which he turns his attention to in those around him. He searches, specifically, for a beloved whose character is like his own in terms of the god he once followed, that is, whose basic and unchanging character type is like his own, aside from its achievements in recalling the truth. He seeks out for his beloved, then, not the most accomplished soul, but a soul which displays

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[57] *Phaedrus* 248a1-2.

[58] *Phaedrus* 252d1-3.

the potential to develop itself in the way that he personally most admires, and to achieve that particular sort of greatest perfection after which he strives for himself. A 'Zeus type' soul, for example, as it strives to make itself more like Zeus, will also "choose someone to love who is a Zeus himself in the nobility of his soul,"[59] someone who "has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others,"[60] and likewise for the souls who followed any of the other gods: "they take their god's path and seek for their own a boy whose nature is like the god's."[61] This nature, however, need only be a 'talent' or a disposition in the beloved, not yet a fully realized ability or virtue. The lover searches for a beloved who has the *capacity* to become the sort of man whom he himself most hopes to be, whether either of them have achieved much with respect to this goal yet or not. And since it is the natural hope of each soul to emulate its own god as perfectly as possible, and a beloved with such a disposition will himself be a soul who followed the same god as the lover, the lover is seeking out not only a beloved who shares a similar disposition to his own, but a beloved who shares the same aspirations, whether the beloved is yet aware of these aspirations in himself or not.

And once he has found such a beloved, the lover's driving aim is "to help him take on as much of their own god's qualities as possible,"[62] at least "so far as a human

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[59] *Phaedrus* 252e3-4.

[60] *Phaedrus* 252e4-5.

[61] *Phaedrus* 253b4-5.

[62] *Phaedrus* 253a6-b1.

being can share a god's life."[63] And so, "once they have found him and are in love with him they do everything to develop that talent"[64] which first drew them to him in their search for a beloved. In order to do this, however, to help the beloved progress towards the realization of his potential to emulate their shared god, the lover himself must develop a better understanding of that god's true nature, and of his own, and his beloved's, natures and standings with respect to that god. He cannot effectively assist his beloved in achieving their shared goal, that is, without a working knowledge of what that goal is, and of how human beings like themselves might go about achieving it. And so, "if any lovers have not yet embarked on this practice," presumably, of deliberately seeking to emulate their god, "then they start to learn, using any source they can and also making progress on their own."[65] And the lover's ability to do this, to seek out a greater understanding of his god and himself with respect to that god, has been greatly augmented by his experience of love. Such lovers "are well equipped to track down their god's true nature with their own resources because of their driving need to gaze at the god, and as they are in touch with the god by memory they are inspired by him and adopt his customs and practices.... For all of this they know they have the boy to thank, and so they love him all the more."[66]

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[63] *Phaedrus* 253a3.

[64] *Phaedrus* 252e5-6.

[65] *Phaedrus* 252e6-8.

[66] *Phaedrus* 252e9-253a5.

III. How Love Transforms the Lover

What, then, should we take to have happened to the lover in the course of this process of falling in love, as Plato has described it to us here? And how is it that the eros which he feels for his beloved has put him in a position to more effectively pursue his individual project of living a life as much as possible like that of his god, of reshaping his own soul in the image of the god whom he follows? The changes which Plato describes as taking place in the lover under the influence of love look at least partially epistemological, and partially motivational. Before this experience, it seems, the lover may well be entirely unaware of his recollections of the perfect beings and the experiences of his soul before his birth. The sudden confrontation with physical beauty, however, breaks his complacency in accepting the world around him as the one which is most certainly real, and about which he can most reliably know. In the course of his ordinary life, he has found himself confronted with a reaction in his soul which his knowledge of the everyday world cannot adequately explain. He is ultimately forced, then, if he has the self-awareness and perspective to recognize this reaction as something more than what can be accounted for completely by his animal needs, to look for an explanation of this power which beauty has over him in something beyond his experiences thus far in this world. He is forced to turn to a recollection of the true nature of Beauty in order to understand the disproportionate effect which the beauty in this world has had on him, if he is to escape the tortured confusion into which this experience has thrown his soul. And once he has been forced to confront his recollection of one of

the perfect beings, he is no longer able to ignore such recollection, or to take it for granted, as he once did. When his mind is cast back, almost involuntarily, to his vision of true Beauty by the shock of proximity to the beauty which he has encountered here, he is also put in mind of the context in which he experienced this Beauty, of the other perfect beings which stood alongside it outside of heaven,[67] and of the state of his own soul as it was when he first experienced this vision. He experiences this vision of Beauty, and the intimation, at least, of some of its context, as something like a revelation, from which he cannot simply turn back to his previous way of life.

Having experienced this revelation of Beauty, however, what is it that moves the lover from his fascination with the physical beauty of the body which has caused this reaction, to the search for a beloved with a certain type of soul? Plato does not address this transition explicitly here in the *Phaedrus*, but we may imagine, from what he has said elsewhere, how this transformation in the focus of the lover's eros, from the physical to the spiritual or psychological, is meant to take place. True Beauty, Plato has argued elsewhere, is not best approximated in this world by the physical. Physical beauty is the most efficacious trigger for our recollection of true Beauty, because it is that aspect of beauty which is most easily accessible to us in this world, as something which can be directly perceived through the senses, without the assistance of a previously well-developed understanding of what beauty is. But once the lover has experienced his revelatory recollection of the true nature of beauty, he will realize that Beauty is

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[67] Such as "Self-control," explicitly (*Phaedru*s 254b6-8).

approximated far more closely by "a soul that is beautiful and noble and well formed"[68] than it can be by anything physical, and that "the beauty of people's souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies."[69] Once he has realized this, the physical beauty of a human body will no longer be enough to satisfy his newfound need to be near that which is beautiful. He will be driven to seek out a kind of beauty which more closely approximates the true nature of beauty which he has come to understand, and this will require him to find a beloved who is beautiful in soul as well as body.

Why, then, does the lover not simply seek out the most actually beautiful soul which he can find to pursue as his beloved, rather than searching for a beloved who displays a certain sort of personality type or potential? It seems that this must have to do with some aspect of his experience outside of the insight which he has achieved into the nature of beauty specifically. Otherwise, his eros would carry him almost invariably towards the most already perfect soul he could find. And the most obviously relevant aspect of his experience of the recollection of Beauty, in this connection, is the state in which he now recalls his soul to have been at the time when he first encountered this perfect being, providing him with a newfound insight into the nature of his own soul. The project towards which his revelation of Beauty directs him, then, is at least in part one of self-exploration and development. This vivid recollection of a perfect being beyond the physical world of his everyday experience has opened his eyes not only to the

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[68] *Symposium* 209b7.

[69] *Symposium* 210b7-8.

paucity of the 'reality' which he currently inhabits, but also to the fact that he himself, in his most pure form, is a denizen not of this physical world, but of the world of soul which he inhabited when he first encountered this perfect being. He has not only turned away from the physical and towards the psychological or spiritual in terms of his understanding of beauty, then, but also in his overall focus and prioritization, in his understanding of what is most important to and for himself. He now sees that his true self, that self with which he should be most concerned, is his soul, and that the experience and interests of this soul extend far beyond the concerns of his current embodied self. This new understanding must come with a corresponding shift in perspective as to what is most important to his own interests and satisfaction. And surely some part of the newfound strength which he gains to combat the 'bad horse' in his soul is the realization, through this revelation, however partial, of his own true nature, that a gratification of those sorts of desires will never be enough to bring his soul real satisfaction. What he most desires, he now realizes, is not to obtain or possess any given thing, but rather himself to *be* in a certain state, or *become* a certain sort of being. And he now perceives the particular type of eros which he is experiencing in the context of this new understanding of himself and his desires more generally.

But the sort of being which he now realizes that he most desires to be is not, importantly, one of the perfectly real beings themselves. The perfectly real beings, like Beauty itself, are described in Plato's analogical myth as perfectly static and unchanging,

unmoving and unmoved, *outside* of the heavens which exhaust the dynamic world.[70] The soul, on the other hand, both human and divine, is defined by its motion and change, and by a complete inability ever to be static or unchanging. Every soul is in essence a "self-mover,"[71] and "what moves itself... never desists from motion, since it does not leave off being itself."[72] There is a certain sense, then, in which a soul cannot, *in principle*, be perfect, at least not in the complete sense in which the perfectly real beings are. However, Plato explicitly describes the souls of the gods, and the others among the souls in heaven who are most successful in becoming like the gods, as perfect. At the time when our un-embodied souls attended the divine banquet of knowledge, he argues, "we who celebrated it were wholly perfect, and free of all the troubles that awaited us in time to come."[73] Presumably, then, these souls are perfect in some sense other than that in which the perfectly real beings are. Moreover, there seems to be a *sense* in which even an embodied human being may be 'perfect,' since "A man who uses reminders of these things [presumably, the perfectly real beings, and possibly his other experiences in heaven as well] correctly is always at the highest, most perfect level of initiation, and he is the only one who is as perfect as perfect can be."[74] The kind of 'perfection' being hinted at here, then, seems not to be the *complete* perfection which one finds in the

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[70] *Phaedrus* 247c1-e2.

[71] *Phaedrus* 245e3.

[72] *Phaedrus* 245c6-7.

[73] *Phaedrus* 250c1-2.

[74] *Phaedrus* 249c7-9.

perfectly real beings, but rather, the kind of 'perfection' which we can attribute to a thing which has become *as perfect* as a thing of that sort could possibly be. Even the gods, it seems, are not really 'wholly' perfect, nor are they themselves the most wholly divine beings, but acquire both their perfection and their divinity, to some extent, derivatively, from their proximity to the perfectly real beings. It is only these perfectly real beings outside of heaven which are fully perfect, and which make up the "realities by being close to which the gods are divine."[75] The gods themselves then, are not completely perfect beings, but rather, the most perfect possible *souls*. And so when we, as souls, aspire to be perfect, what we must aspire to be is like them.

When the lover experiences his revelatory recollection of Beauty, then, it seems that he becomes aware, to whatever extent, of at least three things: first, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of the perfectly real beings; second, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of the gods, and in particular of his own god; and third, the existence and, to some extent, the nature of his own immaterial soul. He consequently comes to realize, however clearly or confusedly, several different things about the nature of his own aspirations. He realizes, first, that he desires desperately to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings again, and, moreover, that this is something which can only be accomplished in the very long term, and not in his embodied life on earth. Second, he realizes that he himself was once a much more perfect and contented being than he is now, and that he desires to be this sort of being again, to become again his more perfect,

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[75] *Phaedrus* 249c7.

and most perfect, self. He further realizes, it seems, that this most perfect self which he once was possessed a certain *sort* of perfection, and that it achieved this particular sort of perfection by emulating the most perfect example of perfection of that kind, in the person of a particular god. Third, he realizes that he desires desperately to be in the presence of this god again, just as he does to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings, but that this, also, is not something which he can achieve in this life. He will thus set out to regain as much of his former perfection and closeness to the real beings and his god as is possible in this world, by emulating his god and pursuing insight into the nature of the real beings to whatever extent is possible for an embodied human being, perhaps with hopes, ultimately, of reclaiming his former existence.

To speak in this way of different *kinds* of perfection may seem strange, in a Platonic context, but we must keep in mind that the 'perfection' we are speaking of here is not the true or complete perfection possessed by the perfectly real beings. Rather, it is the greatest perfection, the closest approximation to true perfection, we might say, which it is possible for *souls* to achieve. And this degree of perfection, it seems, is the greatest perfection achievable by any being within the bounds of heaven.[76] But if the perfection of the gods is only an approximation to complete perfection, the greatest possible perfection achievable for souls, then it is only a certain degree of perfection which the gods possess, and there will always be some extent to which even the gods are lacking. It becomes plausible, then, even on Plato's view, that this same degree of perfection might

[76] At least, this would seem to be the case within the cosmology of the *Phaedrus*.

be achievable in various ways.[77] Each of the gods, then, would represent one of the possible ways in which a soul might most closely approximate true perfection, one of the ways in which a soul, to some extent inevitably imperfect by its very nature, might come to be as perfect as a soul can be.

In its un-embodied life in heaven, it then seems, the soul desired to be close to perfection in at least three ways. First, it desired to be in the presence of the perfectly real beings, which embody a complete perfection of a kind unachievable for itself, but the understanding of which strengthened and fortified it to maintain itself in the most perfect state which was possible for it. Second, it desired to be in the presence of its god, the embodiment and example of the most perfect state which a soul of its own disposition could possibly achieve. And third, it desired to make itself as much like its god as it could, to actually become as perfect as its own disposition could possibly allow. All of these aspirations of our un-embodied souls appear to be closely connected on Plato's account; each kind of 'closeness' to perfection enables the furtherance and persistence of the others. However, there is no obvious priority among them. Do our souls, and those of the gods, desire to behold the perfectly real beings because this will strengthen them and keep them in their most perfect state as they go about the rest of their existence within heaven? Or do they desire to be strengthened in soul and as perfect as possible because this is what will allow them to continue to behold the perfectly real beings? Do

[77] That is, again, it becomes plausible within the context of the *Phaedrus* specifically. Whether this view is compatible with all of Plato's arguments elsewhere, and in particular with some of his views on the unity of the virtues, is a further question, and one I do not mean to have claimed to address here.

they desire to follow their god because this will help them to perfect their own souls? Or do they desire to perfect their own souls, at least in part, because this will allow them to follow their god more closely? Aspects of the myth seem to hint at any or all of these answers. And it seems important, for this point, that the souls who attain the rim of heaven and behold the real beings outside do not remain in this state of beatific vision indefinitely. Although the 'divine banquet' is a deeply ecstatic experience for all of the souls, it does not exhaust their existence, nor is it the final aim of their existence, towards which they strive until it is achieved, and in which they then remain. Their 'home' is within heaven, and their proper "work"[78] is here. The answer to these questions, then, is not at all obvious.

The fact that the answer is not obvious, however, may give us some helpful insight into the experience of the lover. Having come to understand these three desires in himself, to be in the presence of the real beings, to be in the presence of his god, and to be in his own most perfect possible un-embodied state, through emulation of his god, he has also come to understand that none of these desires can be fully satisfied in his current, embodied, life. Each of these desires, however, has an analogue in his current, embodied, life, and he will now recognize that he pursues these desires as the closest possible approximation to the joys of his un-embodied life here in this world. As each of these three aspects of his former existence were interconnected and mutually supporting, but were nevertheless to some extent distinct and independent sources of joy and satisfaction

[78] *Phaedrus* 247a6.

in his un-embodied life, each of which he desired and pursued, so too are their analogues in this world. And while he now knows that, in the long run, his greatest desire is to regain these pleasures of his former life in heaven, he may also pursue their analogues here on earth for the independent sake of the similar joy and satisfaction they provide him, and not only instrumentally. The lover may pursue recollection of the perfect beings, then, not only as a means to regaining his former life in heaven, but because the experience of this recollection is the closest thing possible in this life to the joy of beholding them directly in his former one.[79] He will attempt to make his soul as much like that of his god as possible, despite being separated from much of his own 'divine' nature by being bound up with a physical body, "locked in it like an oyster in its shell,"[80] not only because this might ultimately help him to regain his original state, but because this is the way of life that will allow him to be at his best and most contented with his own condition while he remains 'down here.' And, he will seek out closeness and intimacy with another human being who is like his god in character, not only because this may help him in his own process of emulating, and perhaps ultimately regaining his place beside, the god, but because this nearness to another soul which is like his god's is the closest joy which he can have in this life to his former nearness to the god himself. And so Plato describes the lover as seeing his beloved, in the beginning, as to some extent a

[79] And, indeed, it seems quite likely that the philosopher, as another kind of lover, does precisely this.

[80] *Phaedrus* 250c6-7.

proxy for his god, treating him "like his very own god, building him up and adorning him as an image to honor and worship."[81]

So, here is an answer to at least a part of our previous question: if the lover is driven to pursue a beloved by his revelatory recollection of the true nature of beauty, then why does he seek out a beloved of a particular personality type, rather than simply the most beautiful beloved he can find? There is only one Beauty, after all, not different types. The answer seems to be that, although at first the lover is motivated only by a confused desire to be near that which is beautiful, after his experience of recollection of the perfect beings, his desires have broadened. While he still desires to be in the presence of someone beautiful, his aims have changed more than is explained only by his new understanding of what beauty really is. He now, with his newfound insight into his former life in heaven, has discovered an additional desire: to be near someone who is like his god. He now seeks out a beloved, then, who is *both* of these things, both beautiful in soul and body and of a character like that of his god. But another part of our question remains unanswered: if the lover is driven by a desire to be near someone who is like his god, then why would he choose a beloved who displayed the mere *potential* to be like his god, rather than searching for the most perfect example of this personality type that he could find?

The answer to this part of our question seems slightly more complicated. We have said that the lover desires, now, two different but related things: to be close to that

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[81] *Phaedrus* 252e1-2.

which is beautiful, and to be close to a soul like that of his god. That beauty with which he is most concerned now is not physical beauty, however, but spiritual or psychological beauty, the beauty of the beloved's soul. Combining these two concerns, then, and setting aside for the moment the interest which the lover does still retain, to some extent, in the physical beauty of his beloved, we might say that the lover now desires to be close to a soul which is beautiful in a specific way, that is, in that way of which his own god is the most perfect example. We might say, then, that the lover desires to be close to a certain kind of beauty of soul. The beauty of souls, however, unlike the beauty of bodies, is not directly perceptible through the senses.[82] Physical proximity alone, then, will not be enough to reliably bring the lover into contact with this kind of beauty, in the way that it was enough to give him access to the physical beauty of the beloved through his faculty of sight. To be close to the beauty of the beloved's soul, then, the lover must find a way to gain some sort of access to the beloved's soul or mind, and to do this reliably would seem to require the trust and confidence of the beloved, a willingness on his part to share his thoughts and experiences, to more intimately and fully reveal the contents and the character of his soul to the lover. And with his newfound insight into the nature of both Beauty and the soul, the lover will presumably be able to realize this. The sort of closeness he desires, then, is no longer the sort of thing which the lover might have any hope of achieving solely through his own initiative, without the consent and assistance of the beloved. And so the lover must find a beloved who not only displays the kind of

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[82] See above, pp. 11-12; c.f. Plato. *Charmides.* Trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague. *Plato: Complete Works.* Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 154d1-155a4.

beauty of soul to which he hopes to be near, but who is also willing to share that beauty with him, to trust him with a nearness to his soul, by giving him access, in a suitable sense, to his inner self and life.

IV. Pedagogical Love

But what would move the beloved, initially, to do this? The lover is motivated in his pursuit of the beloved by the desire he has to be close to the kind of soul which he believes the beloved to have, but what is to motivate the beloved to allow, and even to actively promote, such closeness between them? Plato's account of this initial stage of the relationship from the perspective of the beloved is somewhat vague in the *Phaedrus*, up until the point at which the beloved himself in turn falls in love with the lover. And by this point in the relationship, it seems, there must already be an established degree of closeness and non-physical intimacy between the lover and the beloved. What initially moves the beloved to allow the lover a place in his life, it seems, is the recognition by the beloved that the lover genuinely desires to help him and to offer him some good or benefit. "Because he is served with all the attentions due a god by a lover..., and because he is by nature disposed to be a friend of the man who is serving him... as time goes forward he is brought... to a point where he lets the man spend time with him."[83] And once he has allowed the lover to spend time with him, and begun to engage with him in conversation and joint activities, he comes to realize how deeply the lover desires not only to be near him, but to help and to benefit him. "Now that he allows his lover to talk and spend time with him, and the man's good will is close at hand, the boy is amazed by it as he realizes that all the friendship he has from his other friends and relatives put

[83] *Phaedrus* 255a1-b2. This passage in its entirety is somewhat more erotically charged than the way in which I have excerpted it here suggests, but I do not take this to be a significant omission for purposes of the present argument.

together is nothing compared to that of this friend who is inspired by a god."[84] Notice, here, the increased reliance on the language of *philia*, as opposed to eros, in this passage addressing the development of the relationship from the perspective of the beloved. This is a point to which we will return again shortly. For now, though, we see that it seems the beloved is initially drawn to the lover by the realization that the lover genuinely desires, and, perhaps, to some extent is actually able, to benefit him and offer him help. There is an extent, then, to which the beloved is initially drawn to the lover by just what one might be led to expect by a more traditional Greek understanding of the dynamic within such relationships: the expectation of some benefit to himself.

And this is in line with much of what we see brought forward in Plato's arguments in the *Lysis*, where one of the central troubles driving the aporia seems to be the question of how it can be possible for both parties to a friendship to benefit one another, when the capacity to offer benefit seems, on the face of it, to imply a position of superiority, at least in that respect in which the benefit is offered.[85] It is a central element of Plato's arguments in the *Lysis* that friends must be of benefit, or 'useful,' to one another. To him it seems, on the face of it, however, that "like is useless to like insofar as they are alike. And to admit that the useless is a friend would strike a sour note."[86] If the friends are to benefit one another, then, it seems initially as though the benefits they offer

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[84] *Phaedrus* 255b3-7.

[85] See, in particular, Plato. *Lysis*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo. Plato: Complete Works. Ed. John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 214e4-215a7 & 221d1-e4. Hereafter '*Lysis*.'

[86] *Lysis* 222b9-c2.

one another must be different. Moreover, this discussion of friendship in the *Lysis* is dramatically nested within a discussion of eros. The dialogue with Lysis is conducted at least partially for the benefit of his hapless lover, as a lesson from Socrates in how to "carry on a conversation with him instead of talking and singing the way... you've been doing,"[87] and so, presumably, to more successfully engage his attention. And if there is any conclusion in the *Lysis* which seems to be taken seriously as a culmination of the dialogue, it is not one about friendship in general, but about its specific application within erotic relationships, the claim that"the genuine and not pretended lover must be befriended by his boy."[88] This question, then, of how the parties to a relationship are to benefit one another unless each is offering something in which the other is "deficient,"[89] along with the presumption that one cannot offer to another something in which one is equally 'deficient' oneself, seems to be treated as an equally important and thorny problem in the specific case of erotic love. If "a thing desires what it is deficient in,"[90] it seems initially, then that which the lover desires in or from the beloved, and that which the beloved desires in or from the lover (if, indeed, the beloved feels desire toward the lover at all) must be different, and the traditional view of such relationships as essentially asymmetric is maintained. If this really is the case for the lover and beloved, though, Plato's argument in the *Lysis* implies, then it is so for reasons which apply equally well to

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[87] *Lysis* 206c 6-8.

[88] *Lysis* 222b1-2.

[89] *Lysis* 221e1.

[90] *Lysis* 221e1.

all friendships. And the claim that *all* friendships are essentially asymmetric, especially in the strong way in which erotic relationships have been traditionally conceived of as being, looks quite a bit more difficult to swallow. This again, though, is a point to which we will later return. For now, let's focus on the emphasis which the *Lysis* places, here and elsewhere, on the thought that in order for the lover to gain the beloved's affection, to be 'befriended by his boy,' he must be able to offer the beloved some benefit which the beloved will recognize as such. What sort of a benefit could we expect this to be, in the context of Plato's account in the *Phaedrus*?

Given the lover's newfound focus on the goods of the soul and the world of the gods and the perfectly real beings, and consequent understanding of love as, at least in large part, an avenue for honoring and pursuing these goods, it seems reasonable to think that he would search for a beloved who would likewise value, or at least be strongly inclined to value, these same sorts of goods. And, given Plato's view of human virtue, it seems likely that in searching for a beautiful soul, of whatever sort, he would be searching for a soul who would also value such goods highly. In attempting to offer some benefit to his beloved, then, as a way of winning his trust and affection, it seems reasonable to think that the lover would want this benefit to be of the sort which a beautiful soul would think valuable. The beloved's appreciation of a lover's generosity with less genuinely admirable goods, perhaps even such unworthy ones as the money or social advancement which seem to be promised (but rarely delivered) by the lovers condemned in Socrates' and Lysias' earlier speeches, would display a conspicuous

deficiency in the very qualities of soul to which the 'genuine' lover is most attracted in a beloved. A beloved's receptivity to benefits of this sort from a prospective lover, then, might be a strong indication to the lover in search of a beautiful soul that he had chosen his beloved unwisely. The sort of benefits which such a lover could be expected to offer his beloved, then, in order to initially attract his attention and gain his trust, would seem most likely to be benefits to the beloved's soul, and in particular to those aspects of his soul which the lover has come to see as most highly valuable: his personal virtue and philosophical understanding of the gods and the real beings. In responding positively to the offer of such benefits, then, and perceiving their exceptional value, the beloved will only be further confirming his lover's belief that he is indeed a beautiful soul, with his natural ability to recognize the truly valuable un-effaced by his time spent away from heaven.

And to be in a position to offer such benefits to the beloved in the development of his soul, it seems natural to think, the lover must pursue a beloved who is at least not significantly his own superior in these respects. Since the lover himself, then, is still far from having achieved his hope of fully emulating his god, his beloved, likewise, if he is to attract him with the promise of benefit in this respect, must possess the potential for such an achievement, but not yet its full realization. The lover's search for a beloved, then, is constrained by two parameters upon the beloved's degree of achievement with respect to the perfection of his soul: the lover's desire for a beautiful soul will attract him to those of significant achievement with respect to virtue, while his desire for intimacy

with such a soul will drive him towards those whose degree of achievement is not so high as to place them beyond his own capacity to assist in this respect. These opposite pressures, it seems, one providing a lower and one an upper limit upon the realized virtue of the beloved, will drive him towards the pursuit of a beloved with a degree of virtue roughly similar to his own. To a soul in this condition, the philosophical and psychological insight which the lover has recently gained through his experience of love will present a significant and attractive benefit, an advantage in the pursuit of virtue which the beloved does not yet share, and one which may allow the lover to win his attention and trust.

At this intermediate stage of the relationship, then, in which the beloved has accepted the lover's advances, and admitted him into a trusted place among his social intimates, but does not yet return his love, the relationship between the two is still broadly pedagogical. The lover relies upon the insight love has granted him into the nature of their god, the real beings, and souls like their own to guide the beloved in his nascent emulation of that god and pursuit of philosophy and virtue. The benefits which each receives, in turn, remain very different: the beloved receives the lover's assistance in pursuing greater wisdom and virtue, while the lover receives (primarily) the pleasure of closeness to the beloved's burgeoning spiritual beauty. Already at this stage in the relationship, then, the benefits which love has brought to both parties are considerable. The frenzy and discomfort which eros had initially induced in the lover have been soothed and assuaged by the combination of his own increased understanding and

psychological discipline and his success in attaining some physical and psychological intimacy with the object of his desire. The more disturbing signs of 'madness' which had marked his initial experience of love have been replaced by a level of contentment with these achievements, and enjoyment of the company of his beautiful beloved. For the beloved's part, it seems, such a relationship is likely to be both educationally rewarding and socially unburdensome. Lovers of this sort "show no envy, no mean-spirited lack of generosity, toward the boy, but make every possible effort to draw him into being totally like themselves and the god to whom they are devoted,"[91] and so the beloved will find himself with much to gain, and little of importance to lose. A relationship which never progressed beyond this stage, perhaps, would be nothing to be ashamed of, as the 'madness' of love, thus properly pursued by the lover, has already brought much benefit to both parties, and done little harm, if any, to either. Crucially, though, a love which never progressed beyond this stage would still have fallen far short of providing the 'greatest benefit' to the lover and beloved of which Plato argues that love is capable. And, perhaps even more crucially, at this stage the lover has done very nearly everything he can to respond to his experience of love correctly. If the relationship which he now shares with his beloved is to offer its fullest benefit to either one of them, this further development is no longer in his hands. The success of their love now depends not primarily upon the lover's agency, but on that of the beloved.

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[91] *Phaedrus* 253b7-10.

V. The Beloved Becomes a Lover

If all goes as it ideally should between the lover and beloved, then after they have spent some time together in this sort of a relationship, the lover guiding and assisting the beloved, and the beloved rewarding him with affection and social intimacy, the beloved, in turn, will find himself unexpectedly stuck by his own transformational experience of eros:

> Think how a breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source; that is how the stream of beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter. It enters through his eyes, which are its natural rout to the soul; there it waters the passages for the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one with love in return.[92]

Just as the lover initially was, then, the beloved is taken off guard by a sudden confrontation with the seemingly disproportionate power which beauty has over him. Unlike the lover's, however, the beloved's shocking experience of beauty is not elicited directly by a sensory encounter with an 'image' of beauty in one of the 'things down here,' but is in some crucial sense mediated by his existing relationship with the lover. The beauty which he thus encounters, moreover, is not just any beauty, or even the beauty of the lover himself,[93] but in some sense an 'echo,' or reflection of the beloved's *own* beauty, which he seems to have previously taken little notice of. And, though it is the beloved's own beauty he sees, he is initially unable to recognize himself in it. This experience of beauty, then, is every bit as maddening and disorienting for him as it was for his lover. "The boy is in love, but he has no idea what he loves. He does not know,

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[92] *Phaedrus* 255c4-d2.

[93] Or, at least not *only* the beauty of the lover. More on this difficult point later.

and cannot explain, what has happened to him.... He does not realize that he is seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror."[94]

If he too responds to his love correctly, it seems, this experience of confronting his own beauty in the 'mirror' of the lover will lead him along a precisely similar journey of revelatory recollection and psychological self-development. Just as the lover was, he now finds himself overwhelmed by the urge to be close to the seeming possessor of this earthly beauty, the lover who has made this beauty visible to him. Just as the lover did, he finds relief for his frenzied state of soul only in the presence of his beloved other. "So, when the lover is near, the boy's pain is relieved... and when they are apart he yearns as much as he is yearned for, because he has a mirror image of love in him – 'backlove' – though he neither speaks nor thinks of it as love, but as friendship."[95] And just as the lover was, he is at first inclined to misinterpret this violent attraction as a primarily physical desire, driven by the desperate need he feels to be close to that which nourishes the wings of his soul, and by the unenlightened urgings of his own 'bad horse,' to mistake sexual intercourse for the most suitable way to calm his inner turmoil. Afforded easy access to the lover by their well established social relationship, moreover, he now faces a much less significant practical barrier to acting on these urgings than the lover had initially found. In the throes of the first frenzy of erotic madness "he wants to see, touch, kiss, and lie down with"[96] the lover, and with few external circumstances to impede his

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[94] *Phaedrus* 255d3-5.

[95] *Phaedrus* 255d7-e2.

[96] *Phaedrus* 255e3-4.

path toward doing so "of course, as you might expect, he acts on these desires soon after they occur."[97] The beloved's first encounter with eros, then, is in some ways even more precarious than that of the lover, insofar as the immediate accessibility of his beloved other provides him with an even greater opportunity to go astray in his interpretation of what is happening to him. Without an enforced passage of time between the dizzying onset of erotic symptoms and the practical possibility of a sexual encounter with the desired individual, provided in the lover's case by the need for an extended seduction, the beloved seems in even greater danger of reacting unreflectively to his desire, forgoing the opportunity to be reminded of the world of the gods and the perfectly real beings in favor of the far easier path of surrendering to pleasure like a 'four-footed beast.'

And this, in turn, provides a new temptation for the lover as well. "When they are in bed, the lover's undisciplined horse has a word to say to the charioteer – that after all its sufferings it is entitled to a little fun."[98] After all that he has done to tame the bad horse in his soul, then, to bring it into harmony with the good horse, under the control of the charioteer, the lover is now likely to find himself in a position where all external barriers to taking an action which he rationally recognizes as harmful to both his beloved and the long-term well-being of their relationship with one another have been removed. In his own confused struggle to understand the effect that eros is having on him, the beloved is still painfully torn between the pull of the bad horse in his soul and that of the

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[97] *Phaedrus* 255e4-5.

[98] *Phaedrus* 255e6-256a2.

good horse, and given, in addition, the faith which he has in the lover's desire to do him good, may be easily swayed by attempts that the lover might make to initiate more serious sexual activity. At this critical point in their relationship, then, the beloved is uniquely vulnerable to harm by a moment of weakness on the part of the lover. "The boy's bad horse has nothing to say, but swelling with desire, confused, it hugs the lover and kisses him in delight at his great good will. And whenever they are lying together it is completely unable, for its own part, to deny the lover any favor he might beg to have."[99] The beloved's bad horse, however, is far from the dominant force in his soul. Just as it had in the lover's case, the increased proximity to his beloved other provokes not only a greater intensity in the straining of the bad horse, but also a powerful counter-reaction. The charioteer in the beloved's soul, with the good horse under its command as an ally, will resist the urgings of the bad horse in his soul, and, if sufficiently strong, even the misguided pleadings of a briefly faltering lover, overcoming the forces of both these internal and external challenges "with modesty and reason."[100]

The lover and beloved, then, are now both battling the bad horses in their respective souls. Although the lover has already done much to tame his bad horse, it seems, so that it no longer attempts to overpower the good horse and the charioteer by sheer force, as it did in its initial drive towards sex with the beloved, it has not fallen silent in attempts to *persuade* the charioteer to indulge it. This sort of influence by the

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[99] *Phaedrus* 256a2-4.

[100] *Phaedrus* 256a6-7.

bad horse, though perhaps more subtle, may be even more dangerous, insofar as the charioteer, if mistakenly persuaded, has the power to direct the good horse into cooperation as well. Should the bad horse succeed in misleading the charioteer, then, it seems there will be nothing left in the soul to combat it. The beloved, in turn, has still to fight both battles with the bad horse in his soul, to restrain it by countervailing force into submission as the lover initially had, and to learn to reject its more subtle pleadings for complicity by his charioteer, before he can be confident that he has overcome its influence sufficiently for the success of his love. As this common psychological struggle continues, if it is to be successful, then at some point in the development of their now mutual love the two parties will find themselves approaching a position of parity. Each now both loves and desires the other, and each is engaged in an equivalent process of spiritual and psychological self-development which requires a growing philosophical knowledge of their own nature and the nature of the goods at which their eros aims in order to succeed. At first the lover, already some way along this path of self-development, may be able to assist the beloved in his own struggle against his bad horse, but eventually the beloved will catch up with him along this path, and by the time that they have both succeeded in this struggle, they will find themselves in a roughly equivalent position. The advantage in insight which the lover initially enjoyed, by virtue of his revelatory experience of love, will be gradually effaced by the beloved's own progression through this same revelatory experience. If both are successful in their

response to love, then, "if the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds,"[101] then the fundamental asymmetry of their relationship will be dissolved. The distinction between their roles as lover and beloved will become a primarily historical (and perhaps social/conventional) one, with little importance for the continuing dynamic within their relationship.

And such a relationship will, Plato makes a point to emphasize, continue, not just until the fury of passion has run its course, but throughout both parties' lives, and even into the afterlife. Having mutually conquered the influence of their respective bad horses, under what one might imagine to be some of the most challenging circumstances possible, the pair of lovers "are modest and fully in control of themselves, now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue."[102] This better part of their souls, in turn, "will lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy"[103] in the remainder of their lives together, and if they do this, then "their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding."[104] Notice here, that Plato is no longer speaking of two lives, but of one. The lovers who have come this far, it seems, will share not only understanding, but everything which is important to the definition of a life. From this point forward they will share not only time and activities, but in some important sense have a single life in common. And this shared life will be

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[101] *Phaedrus* 256a7-8.

[102] *Phaedrus* 256b1-4.

[103] *Phaedrus* 256a8.

[104] *Phaedrus* 256b1.

one of a sort which Plato has already claimed in his analogical myth will bring them the greatest possible achievement for an earthly human being:

> No soul returns to the place from which it came for ten thousand years, since its wings will not grow before then, except for the soul of a man who practices philosophy without guile or who loves boys philosophically. If, after the third cycle of one thousand years, the last mentioned souls have chosen such a life three times in a row, they grow their wings back, and they depart in the three-thousandth year.[105]

To 'love boys philosophically,' it seems, is an obvious candidate for what the palinode has just been explaining to us how to do. By the end of this explanation, however, it seems we have come to a potentially surprising conclusion: that it is not specifically loving *boys* philosophically which grants this great benefit, but *loving* philosophically, at all. There seems little sense in which the original beloved of our "philosophical pair"[106] could be plausibly considered a *paiderastes*, philosophical or otherwise. However, an early regrowth of the wings of the soul is now claimed equally for him. The pair of philosophical lovers, "after death... have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests. There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man."[107] This then, is the 'greatest good fortune' which Socrates has set out to argue that love, properly followed, will ensure, a benefit won equally by both 'a lover and his boy.'

Somewhat surprisingly, however, the palinode's account of love does not end here. Even for those who ultimately fail to 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy,' a

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[105] *Phaedrus* 248e8-249a5.

[106] *Phaedrus* 256c8-d1.

[107] *Phaedrus* 256b4-7.

love which has come this far will have created a powerful and lasting bond between the parties:

> If... they adopt a lower way of living, with ambition in place of philosophy, then pretty soon when they are careless..., the pair's undisciplined horses will catch their souls off guard and together bring them to commit that act which ordinary people would take to be the happiest choice of all; and when they have consummated it once, they go on doing this for the rest of their lives.... So these two also live in mutual friendship (though weaker than that of the philosophical pair), both while they are in love and after they have passed beyond it.[108]

And this pair, too, will have won a great reward by their love, though, again, not as great as that of the 'philosophical pair:' "In death they are wingless when they leave the body, but their wings are bursting to sprout, so the prize the have won from the madness of love is considerable."[109] Moreover, even in death they will remain together, and be jointly granted a happy afterlife as a consequence of their success in love: "those who have begun the sacred journey in lower heaven may not by law be sent into darkness for the journey under the earth; their lives are bright and happy as they travel together, and thanks to their love they will grow wings together when the time comes."[110] Though this pair has failed to win the great reward reserved for philosophers and those who love philosophically, then, and so it seems that they will have to wait at least the full ten lifetimes to reclaim their wings, they are nevertheless to be seen as having gained some advantage with respect to this aim, because of the love that they share. And this is an advantage which is not to be gained by those who respond to their experience of eros in a way which does not lead to the forging of such lasting and mutual bonds, even when it

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[108] *Phaedrus* 256b7-d1.

[109] *Phaedrus* 256d3-5.

[110] *Phaedrus* 256d6-9.

does lead to an otherwise rewarding and even constructively virtuous relationship, as in the case of the broadly 'pedagogical' pairing we discussed before. Moreover, the advantage thus gained by these lovers is not only cast in terms the acquisition of a more blessed afterlife, this blessedness itself is in turn closely linked with the fact that the journey they take there is no longer taken alone. It seems that the advantage which this lesser pair of lovers gains, then, both in the afterlife and in their more ideal position with respect to regrowing their wings, may not only be caused by the lasting and mutual friendship which keeps them together through life and the afterlife, but perhaps at least partially constituted by that friendship as well.

And it is here that Socrates abruptly ends his palinode to love, with a description of the benefits not of the highest kind of eros, but of this 'second best' sort of relationship, and a reminder that the speech has been directed, hypothetically, not to an aspiring lover, but to a prospective beloved. "These are the rewards you will have from a lover's friendship, my boy, and they are as great as divine gifts should be."[111] The implication seems to be, then, that even though this lesser pair of lovers does not gain the 'greatest good fortune' with which love is capable of providing us, they have nevertheless gained more than enough to make all of their struggles and great risks worthwhile. Despite acknowledging the serious risks of being badly led astray by one's own 'bad horse' in the earlier stages of love, that is, as well as the potentially dangerous effects that love may have on the behavior of an unworthy lover, and even given the likelihood that

[111] *Phaedrus* 256e3-4.

both parties may still fail to love ‘philosophically’ even after the most dramatic battles in their wars with their respective bad horses have been won, Socrates is nevertheless recommending this arduous process to the beloved whole-heartedly, as one well worth undertaking.

VI. How Love Moves the Beloved

It seems that we must now ask, again, then, what exactly we should take to have happened to the beloved, now himself become a lover, in the course of this process of falling in love. What are we to make of the development of this 'mirror image of love' in the beloved, as Plato has described it to us here? The first question to ask in this respect would seem to be how we are to understand Plato's claim that it is in some sense the beloved's *own* beauty which triggers his initial experience of love, in light of the further claim that this beauty is mediated, in some crucial way, by the person or presence of his lover. There seem to be several obvious candidates for how we might interpret this claim. First, from the suggestion that 'the stream of beauty' 'enters through his eyes,' we might infer that the beauty in question is of a literally visible, that is, physical, sort. The claim would then be that it is the beloved's encounter with his own physical beauty, facilitated in some way by his lover, that touches off his experience of eros. There are several reasons why this version of the claim should strike us as implausible, however. Remember, first of all, what it is about physical beauty that makes it so uniquely suited to elicit an erotic response: the fact that it "alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible"[112] of all the 'images' we can encounter of the real beings here on earth. And the 'visibility' in question here, importantly, is *literal*, not figurative. It is because we can, unexpectedly, catch literal sight of an 'image' of Beauty as we go about our daily lives, experiencing a shock of recognition as this 'image' confronts us through "the sharpest of

[112] *Phaedrus* 250e1.

our bodily senses,"[113] that the 'beauty down here,' as opposed to the many less literal 'images' of the other perfect beings, is most likely to provoke an unsought for experience of recollection in our souls. And this link with direct perceptibility, it seems, is the *only* advantage that physical beauty enjoys in this respect. Were physical beauty in any way more intrinsically lovable than, or even, perhaps, as lovable as, the other earthly 'images' of beauty, it seems, and, more specifically, than spiritual or psychological beauty in particular, then the transformation in focus which the lover's initial attraction to his beloved undergoes upon his dawning awareness of Beauty's true nature would be prevented. Moreover, even beauty as such, physical and otherwise, it seems, is not intrinsically more suited to serve as a spark for eros than are the earthly 'images' of other perfect beings, except insofar as it enjoys this advantage with respect to direct perceptibility: "It would awaken a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as beauty does, and the same goes for the other objects of inspired love."[114] No such direct perception of an earthly 'image' of wisdom (or virtue, or self control, etc.) is possible, however. These qualities of soul, like souls themselves, it seems, can only be inferred from our direct perceptions of physical bodies. If the beauty which touched off the beloved's overpowering experience of eros were physical beauty, then, it seems that this beauty would need to be something he perceived directly, though his bodily senses. But in what way could the lover facilitate such a direct sensory

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[113] *Phaedrus* 250d3-4.

[114] *Phaedrus* 250d4-e1.

encounter between the beloved and his own physical beauty, which would make any sense of the description Plato gives us of his role in the beloved's experience of eros? The imagery here is of an *indirect* encounter with the earthly beauty he confronts: an echo, reflection, or ricochet. This beauty 'bounces back' to the beloved, with whom it had originated, from the lover who had first been struck by it. Since the lover, presumably, does not literally reflect back an image, then, the talk of 'seeing' in this context seems best taken as figurative. If this beauty is not literally *seen* by the beloved, though, it seems best taken not to be physical beauty, given that, aside from its advantage in direct perceptibility, physical beauty is in fact less suited to touch off an experience of recollection, and so eros, than are those non-physical 'images' of beauty which more closely resemble Beauty itself.

The most likely candidate for the beauty the beloved experiences in this way, then, is not beauty of the body, but of the soul. And given Plato's claim that this is the beloved's *own* beauty, reflected back to him in some way by the lover, it seems safe to assume that it is in some sense the beauty of the beloved's own soul. But what are we to make of this claim that the beloved somehow 'sees' the beauty of his own soul 'in the lover' in this indirect way? Given what we have already said of the relationship between the lover and beloved up until this point, there seem to be at least two fairly obvious readings we might give of this claim. First, we might emphasize the talk of the lover as a 'mirror' of the beloved's beauty over the claim that this beauty is the beloved's own in a highly particular sense, and recall that the process of falling in love we have traced on the

part of the lover has ensured a high degree of similarity between the souls of the lover and beloved. [115] If the lover has chosen his beloved wisely, we have argued, then the beloved's soul will be very much like that of the lover along both of the axes according to which Plato has argued that souls are divided into general types. In searching for a soul like that of his god, the lover will have sought out a beloved of the same unchanging character type as his own, as determined by 'the god in whose chorus he danced' before his birth into this world. And in searching for a soul which is not already so accomplished in virtue as to be beyond his own ability to aid in this respect, while already as beautiful as he is capable of winning given this constraint imposed by his own worthiness as a suitor, he will have sought out a beloved whose degree of accomplishment in the development of his soul is relatively comparable to his own. As the beloved comes to know the lover well, then, through the time they spend together and their many conversations with each other, both philosophical and otherwise, he will come to know a soul which is in many of the most important ways very much like his own. In coming to know the lover well, then, the beloved is coming to know a soul whose beauty closely 'mirrors' his own, in both type and degree. Remember, moreover, that the lover's own spiritual and psychological development has already been greatly improved beyond that which he had achieved prior to his 'possession' by eros by the philosophical insight and internal struggle towards self-discipline and understanding which have been required of him by his experience of love thus far. There is a sense in which, then, the current

[115] If, at least, the lover has followed it out correctly.

beauty of the lover's soul is not only a mirror image of the beloved's, but its causal consequence as well, insofar as it is the effect that the beauty of the beloved's soul has had on him which has caused him to develop his own soul to the extent that he currently has. This relationship of both similarity and causal dependency between the beauty of the lover's soul and that of the beloved's, then, would seem to give us a plausible reading for both how the beloved could be said to see 'himself in the lover as in a mirror,' and how the beauty he saw there could be said to 'bounce back' to him as in some sense its original 'source.' On this reading, then, the earthly beauty which sets off the beloved's experience of eros is primarily that which he finds in the soul of the lover, as he comes to know him well through their growing social intimacy, and is best seen as his *own* beauty only at the level of types, and by a strong analogy, through the close similarity between their two souls.

Another plausible reading is available, however, and one which we may have reason to prefer, in the context of our overall reading of the *Phaedrus*. If we emphasize, instead, the claim that the beauty in question is the beloved's own, in a more particular sense, and treat the talk of 'mirrors' and 'echoes' as a somewhat more abstractly metaphorical description of the lover's role in enabling this experience, another fairly obvious reading of how the beloved might come to confront this spiritual or psychological beauty is suggested by the nature of the 'pedagogical' relationship in which we have described the lover and beloved as already engaged. Remember that among the chief benefits the lover has offered the beloved in order to attract his attentions and gain

his trust is assistance and direction in the development of his soul towards greater virtue, and so, greater beauty. And it is in large part the insight the lover has gained into the nature of their common god and of human souls of the unchanging type that he and the beloved share which has allowed him to offer this guidance. However, it seems that a general understanding of the various types of soul, both unchanging and qualitative, would be of relatively little use to him, either in offering this guidance to the beloved, or in the development of his own spiritual or psychological beauty, without at least some further understanding of the application of this general knowledge to the particular cases of himself and his beloved, the specific strengths and failings of his own and his beloved's souls with respect to both their current qualitative type and their approximation to the ideal of the unchanging, 'divine,' type, at the emulation of which they ultimately aim. Moreover, we have argued that in choosing a beloved the lover has sought out someone with a soul which he takes to fall within a relatively specific range of present development with respect to virtue and understanding. And if he is to be correct in this assessment of his beloved's current standing with respect to virtue, as it seems that he must, if their love is to be successful, this requires not only a general knowledge of the nature and types of souls, but an understanding of the particular features of this individual beloved's soul, insofar as these cause and constitute strengths and weaknesses for the beloved with respect to his progress in virtue.[116] And this is a theme we see taken up

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[116] Whether this knowledge will amount only to something like a very accurate sense of where this individual's soul fits into a general taxonomy of souls of the sort that Plato has begun to lay out for us, or whether it will concern a more individualized understanding of the particular features of this individual's psychology seems unclear, and may depend at least in part upon how fine-grained we take Plato's full conception of the 'types' of souls to be. I leave this question open here.

elsewhere in the *Phaedrus* as well: if one is to expertly guide another soul in a given direction, it is not enough to know the destination at which one aims. One must also understand the position from which the soul one hopes to guide begins, in order to know what words or actions will best serve to move that particular soul in the desired direction.

In the second half of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates turns his attention to the topic of rhetoric, he argues that if there is any such thing as a true art of rhetoric it can only be the art of "directing the soul by means of speech, not only in the lawcourts and on other public occasions but also in private."[117] And to do this artfully, he argues, to direct the souls of others in a manner which is not haphazard, "empirical and artless,"[118] but grounded in a true body of knowledge, and therefore reliably effective, will require careful study of the soul: "this is therefor the object towards which the speaker's whole effort is directed, since it is in the soul that he attempts to produce conviction."[119] To artfully guide the souls of others towards conviction on a given topic, the true rhetorician must deploy a careful understanding of the psychology of his audience, not only of psychology in general, although he must have this, but also of the ways in which different souls vary, the various kinds of souls, and the ways in which each of them responds to the various kinds of speech, again, not only in general, but with respect to the given topic at hand, since, presumably, various kinds of soul will be more receptive to various sorts of

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[117] *Phaedrus* 261a9-10.

[118] *Phaedrus* 270b6.

[119] *Phaedrus* 271a1-3.

persuasion with respect to certain topics than to others.[120] And in order to deploy this knowledge effectively, it is not enough for the rhetorician to possess it in the abstract; he must be able to reliably apply it to each of the individual souls to whom he has occasion to address himself: to "put his theory into practice and develop the ability to discern each kind clearly as it occurs in the actions of real life."[121] If he has learned his art well, then, he will "not only be able to say what kind of person is convinced by what kind of speech; on meeting someone he will be able to discern what he is like and make clear to himself that the person actually standing in front of him is of just this particular sort of character."[122] And all of this knowledge, both of theory and application, is required, if he is to artfully "direct the soul"[123] of an individual he intends to persuade, whether in public or in private. Moreover, Socrates argues, when such direction is done properly, with art, by someone who knows the truth about the topic on which he speaks, it can produce not only conviction in the souls of those so guided, but virtue as well.[124]

If the lover, then, during what we have called the 'pedagogical' stage of his relationship with the beloved, is engaged in a process of guiding the beloved towards both greater philosophical understanding and greater personal virtue, and, furthermore, if we may reasonably take philosophical understanding to at least partially involve the

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[120] See *Phaedrus* 271d1-10.

[121] *Phaedrus* 271d11-e2.

[122] *Phaedrus* 271e3-2723.

[123] *Phaedrus* 271d1.

[124] *Phaedrus* 270b4-9.

acquisition of the proper convictions with respect to what is true, then he is engaged, at this point in their relationship, in an activity of which true rhetoric is the art: 'directing the soul' of his beloved 'by means of speech' in order to "impart to it the convictions and virtues"[125] towards which he hopes for his beloved to aspire. Of course, for him to be able to do this in the special case of his beloved will not require him to be in possession of the full art; one need not be a true rhetorician in order to succeed in love. But what is broadly required in order to reliably guide any given soul in any given direction will presumably be the same in both cases: a knowledge of the topic at hand, and a knowledge of the soul to be so guided. The true rhetorician possesses the art insofar as he is able to identify and know the type and nature of *any* soul with which he is presented, and so to reliable guide the soul of anyone he encounters in the way he desires with respect to any topic of which he has knowledge. His knowledge of souls is exhaustive and general, and applicable in any given case. The lover, on the other hand, need only be able to reliably guide one specific individual's soul: that of his chosen beloved. The knowledge of souls which he needs to accomplish his aim, then, in addition to an understanding of the nature of souls as such, and of human souls in general, need not extend to an exhaustive understanding of all of the various types of human souls and their manifestations in and interactions with the world. He need only have this sort of detailed knowledge of the nature of a given soul and its likely responses in the case of the one specific soul which love requires him to successfully guide, the soul of his beloved.

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[125] *Phaedrus* 270b9.

The successful lover, then, in engaging in the project towards which love, at this stage of the relationship, directs him, attempting to guide his beloved towards a greater emulation of their common god, and so, a greater personal virtue and beauty of soul, will need to possess and correctly apply a careful understanding of his beloved's soul, both as it currently is, and as it is capable, at its best, of becoming. And a significant part of his doing this, it seems, given the way in which his own recent progress in virtue has been driven by his newfound insight into the nature of his own soul, both as it now is, and as it stands with respect to his god and its own most perfect possible state, will be an attempt to convey, to whatever extent he can, some portion of his insight into the nature of his beloved's soul to the beloved himself. In guiding the beloved towards a greater realization of his potential for virtue, it seems, the lover must, at least in part, be guiding him towards a greater understanding of his own soul and its beauty, both that which it already possesses, and that of which it is ultimately capable. When the beloved comes to see 'himself in the lover as in a mirror,' then, in the course of this process, it seems natural to read what has happened to him in the following way: the lover, in articulating to the beloved the beauty and potential for beauty which he has come to 'see' in the beloved's soul, the beauty which has led him to choose this particular individual as the one that he loves, out of all of 'those who are beautiful,' has succeeded in bringing the beloved to 'see' himself as the lover now 'sees' him, to understand the beauty of his own soul as the lover does. On this second reading, then, it is this new insight into the beauty of his own soul which touches off the beloved's revelatory recollection of true Beauty

and experience of eros: the beauty he confronts through the surprising glimpse into his own true nature afforded by his conversations with his lover.

On either of these readings, then, we can see that the beloved begins his own progress through the course of eros not only from a position of somewhat heightened risk,[126] but also one of relative advantage, compared with that of the original lover. While the lover had initially been moved to his recollection of true Beauty by an encounter with a physical 'image' of beauty in the world, the beloved's own recollection is sparked by an encounter with an instance of beauty of soul, which already much more closely resembles true Beauty than physical beauty ever can. Moreover, insofar as a perception of beauty of soul will already require some degree of intellectual grasp or understanding of the nature of that beauty, in order to recognize it as an 'image' of beauty at all, in contrast to the way in which physical beauty can simply strike one as such through the senses, completely unreflectively, the beloved will begin his own experience of love already armed with some portion of the philosophical resources for interpreting this experience correctly which the lover had been forced to develop for himself in the disorienting aftermath of his initial revelation. The original lover himself, furthermore, so long as he maintains his hard-won control of the bad horse in his soul, will provide an additional resource on which the beloved can rely during his initial struggle to correctly interpret this experience, offering the beloved the benefit of the understanding gained

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[126] Subject as he is to a greater danger of acting precipitously upon his own sexual desires, both as a consequence of the immediate accessibility of his beloved other, and as a possible result of misplaced trust in the persuasions of a lover who has himself wavered in resisting the bad horse in his soul. See above, pp. 41-43.

from his own recent struggle with the dizzying onset of love. And once the beloved has successfully navigated the initial confusion which his revelatory recollection of Beauty has created in his soul, and been led by this process, as the lover was, to a new understanding of what his soul most centrally desires, he will find that he is already in possession, in the person of the lover, of a close social intimate who is ideally suited to satisfying his deep desire to be close to a soul which is beautiful in that way of which his god is the most perfect example. For all of the same reasons for which the initiating lover, if he chose his beloved wisely, understood the beloved to be ideally suited to satisfying this desire in him, he is now himself equally suited to satisfying it in the beloved. Moreover, the beloved will now have, as the lover initially did not, not only a beloved, in the person the original lover, who is capable of satisfying this driving desire in him, but also one who both understands and shares all of the other deepest desires which this process of love has brought him to recognize within himself. Returning his attention to the things of this world, the beloved, now become a lover, will find that his lover, now become a beloved, is equally driven to pursue both the otherworldly desires which he has discovered in himself and the earthly analogues to them which are achievable within this life. He will not only share these same desires, moreover, but will share the same understanding of them and his reasons for having them that the beloved, now a lover, has come to have, and so the same vision of himself and his soul, and his place in the wider order of the world and the heavens. And, because this lover, now his beloved, also desires to lead his beloved, now a lover, towards the greatest possible

emulation of their shared god, and therefore to help him achieve his own greatest possible perfection of soul and philosophical recollection of the perfectly real beings, the lover, now beloved, not only desires all three of the same earthly aims for *himself* that the beloved, now a lover, has newly come to recognize as his own deepest earthly desires, but also desires them *for* the beloved. The beloved, now lover, then, emerges from his transformative experience of the first shock of love to find, already waiting for him, a lover, now beloved, who is wholly devoted to helping him achieve what he has newly come to recognize as his own most deeply held earthly desires.[127] And it is only at this point in their relationship, when the beloved has emerged from his struggle to interpret his experience of eros, having drawn the correct conclusions, and chooses, with the same self-awareness of what he most truly desires which the original lover had had in choosing him, to take the original lover as his own beloved, that the original lover comes to have as a partner in love that which the original beloved had already had from the beginning: another soul wholly devoted to helping him achieve his own greatest earthly good.

At the beginning of their relationship, then, the lover desired the greatest possible goods of this life not only for himself, but also for his beloved, but the beloved did not

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[127] Or, at least, this is clearly so in the case of the first two such earthly desires: to recollect the perfect beings and to emulate his god. In the case of the third desire, to be close to another soul like that of his god, things seem slightly more complicated. Given that the lover desires, 1) to be close to the beloved, and 2) to himself emulate their shared god as closely as possible, and, further, that the kind of closeness to the beloved which he now desires is reciprocal, requiring that the beloved should also be close to him, it will follow that the lover desires that at least one set of sufficient conditions for the satisfaction of this third desire of the beloved's should obtain. That is, in desiring that the beloved should be close to him, and that he himself should become a soul as much as possible like that of their shared god, the lover desires a state of affairs in which the beloved's desire to be close to a soul like that of his god will be satisfied. Whether this comes to the same thing is questionable, and the question has caused many difficulties in the philosophy of both friendship and love, but it seems reasonable, at least, in the present context, to treat the two as coming close enough for our purposes.

yet desire these goods for the lover, and desired them even for himself only confusedly, insofar as he did already recognize both virtue and knowledge as goods worth acquiring. The lover, then, desired deeply that the beloved should have that which was in fact best for him,[128] and which the beloved did, moreover, to some extent already desire for himself. But the beloved did not, in return, desire that the lover should have that which was best for him, or even that the lover's own desires should be satisfied. After the beloved's own experience of eros, however, this asymmetry in what each desires for the other has disappeared. The beloved, turned lover, now both understands and desires that which is in fact best for him every bit as much as the lover, now beloved, initially did. The original lover, then, now desires that his beloved should have not only that which is objectively speaking best for him, as he has from the beginning, but also that which his beloved, now a lover, most deeply desires for himself, since what the original beloved most desires and what is in fact best for him will now coincide. The original beloved, in turn, in desiring what is in fact best for his beloved, the original lover, now also desires that the original lover should have that which *he* most desires. Each now desires for the

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[128] Again, though, the picture is in fact somewhat more complicated than this. Although Plato's later arguments seem clearly to assume that the lovers will desire what we have called the three 'otherworldly' goods for one another, as well as what we have called the three 'earthly' goods, none of the claims he explicitly makes seem to offer us arguments as to why this should be so. Insofar as what we have called the 'earthly' desires are not only analogous to the lovers' 'otherworldly' aims, however, but are also instrumentally related to them, such that the full satisfaction of these 'earthly' desires would seem to imply the satisfaction of the 'otherworldly' ones, it again seems to be the case that by desiring that one another's 'earthly' desires should be satisfied the lovers are also desiring that the sufficient conditions for the satisfaction of their 'otherworldly' desires should obtain. It may be, then, that Plato takes it to follow from the fact that the lovers desire the sufficient means to the satisfaction of one another's 'otherworldly' desires that they also desire that these desires should be satisfied. If this is so, however, then this is, again, a move which many contemporary readers might question. For present purposes, however, I would like to set such questions to one side.

other to have, then, that which the other most desires for himself, and in doing so desires, both for himself and the other, that which is genuinely best.

VII. From Love to Friendship

And, if one is a student of ancient philosophy, then all of this should be beginning to sound somewhat familiar. The themes emerging here in the *Phaedrus'* account of love are ones which play a central role in Aristotle's well known discussions of friendship in both his *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the *Rhetoric,* Aristotle initially defines friendship in terms of one's wishing one's friends to have that which one believes to be good:

> We may describe friendly feeling towards any one as wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about. A friend is one who feels thus and excites these feelings in return: those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends.[129]

As he elaborates upon this idea, however, it begins to seem clear that, on his considered view, it is not enough for friends to wish one another that which they *believe* to be good, in this way; they must also, at least to some extent, wish that which is *actually* good for one another. Someone who is your friend, he goes on to argue, "shares your pleasure in what is good, and your pain in what is unpleasant."[130] And, "since we all feel glad at getting what we wish for, and pained at getting what we do not,"[131] a friend will wish for one to have one's own wishes satisfied, when one wishes for that which is good. Friends will also be those "to whom the same things are good and evil... for in that case they must have the same wishes, and thus by wishing for each other what they wish for themselves,

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[129] Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. (New York: Random House, 2001) 2.4 1380b35-1381a4. Hereafter '*Rhetoric*.'

[130] *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a4-5.

[131] *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a7-8.

they show themselves each other's friends."[132] Although it seems ambiguous, here, whether those 'to whom the same things are good and evil' should be taken to mean those *who believe* the same things to be good and evil, or those *for whom* the same things are, in fact, good and evil, it seems that Aristotle intends to claim in the passage overall that those who are friends will be both of these things. Our friends, he argues, will be those "who think the things good which we think good, so that they wish what is good for us; and this, as we saw, is what friends must do."[133] These arguments seem to assume, then, that there are, in fact, three things which our friends must wish for us: that which is good for us, that which they *believe* to be good for us, and that which *we* believe to be good for us. And these three things must coincide, at least as a rule, if a friendship is to be practical.[134] Only if they do coincide do the arguments given above plausibly follow. If a friend 'shares your pleasure in what is good,' first of all, then it must be the case that you do take pleasure in that which is good. And since 'we all feel glad at getting what we wish for, and pained at getting what we do not,' it must then be the case that you also wish for that which is good, since if you did not wish for it, then getting it would bring you pain, rather than pleasure. And if your friend is to share this pleasure, then your

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[132] *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a8-12.

[133] *Rhetoric* 2.4 1381a17-19.

[134] Or, at least, if a *good* friendship is. It seems possible, given Aristotle's vacillation elsewhere over whether, and to what extent, the vicious can be said to be friends, that he might accept the possibility of a 'friendship' in which both parties shared the same false beliefs about what things were good for them. Such a friendship, however, would be harmful, rather than beneficial, to both parties, however well intentioned they might be in their actions towards each other. And this sort of a harmful relationship does not seem to be what Aristotle has in mind when he typically speaks of friendship, or in his discussion of it here, since he seems generally to be committed to the position that friendship is both beneficial and a good. C.F. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe. (New York: Oxford U.P., 2002.) 9.12 1171b37-1172a15. Hereafter '*Nicomachean Ethics*.'

friend must also wish, as you do for yourself, that you should have that which is good. Insofar as you and your friend both wish for you to have what is good, then, the wishes you have for yourself and the wishes your friend has for you will coincide. And, given Aristotle's commitment to the claim that that which we wish for is that which we believe to be good, insofar as we wish for that which is in fact good, we will be correct in our beliefs about what is good. Since our friends are those who wish us to have that which they believe to be good, then, and your friend wishes you to have that which you believe to be good, and that which you believe to be good is in fact good, your friend will also believe to be good that which is in fact so. Without these intermediate steps, the final claim above, that it follows from the fact that we agree with our friends about what is good that our friends will 'wish what is good for us' seems like a non-sequitur. If we supply the claim that our own beliefs about what is good for us are correct, however, we can begin to see how the argument is meant to follow. The argument that friends will wish 'for each other what they wish for themselves,' then, seems to turn on a further claim: that that which is good for us will also be good for our friends. And the thought behind this claim would seem to be something along the following lines. We can all be safely assumed to wish for what we believe to be good for ourselves. It has been argued that we will also wish for what we believe to be good for our friends. If that which we believed to be good for ourselves, and that which we believed to be good for our friends were different, however, then these two wishes might easily come into conflict, and we would be forced to choose between pursuing our own perceived good and pursuing that

of our friends. Such a divergence between what we took to be in our own interest and what we took to be in theirs, then, would threaten our mutual well-wishing and trust. And the same will be true of our friends' beliefs about what is in their interest and in ours. It will follow, then, that if our friendship is to be a stable one, we should each believe that that which is good for us is also good for the other. And, given what has been said above, that these beliefs should be true.

And it seems from Aristotle's presentation of a similar account of the features of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, not as his own developed theory, but rather, as the *endoxa*, or received opinions, from which he intends his own arguments to begin, that this sort of an understanding of what constitutes a good friendship was already, at least some extent, current in Greek culture at his time:

> People take a friend to be someone who wishes for and does what is good, or appears good, for the sake of the other, or someone who wishes the friend to exist and to live, for the friend's own sake; .... Others take a friend to be someone who spends time with the other and makes the same choices, or who feels grief and pleasure with his friend.[135]

Moreover, something very like these broad outlines of the features to be expected of friendship, would seem to be operative at various junctures in Plato's own dialogues. In particular the claims that a friend will wish, and attempt to bring about, that which is

[135] *Nicomachean Ethics,* 9.4 1166a3-9.

good, or which he believes to be good, for his friend,[136] that a friend will share in the pleasure and grief of his friend,[137] that a friend will wish the same things for his friend's sake that he wishes for his own,[138] and that a friend will himself be a good and a benefit to his friend[139] all appear to be brought into play, in one form or another, by either Socrates or his interlocutors in the course of significant arguments. Whether or not he endorses these claims about what constitutes a friendship, then, Plato seems very clearly, at least, to be aware of them. And in many cases it seems plausible to think that he does endorse such claims.[140] It seems significant, then, that the point at which the language Plato chooses to employ in describing the relationship between the lover and beloved

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[136]See, e.g., Polemarchus' suggestion in *Republic* II.332a that "friends owe it to their friends to do good for them," Socrates' claim in *Republic* III.413c4-5 that the guardians' "conviction that they must always do what they believe to be best for the city" is evidence of their *philia* for it, and Socrates' inference in *Lysis* 207d4-7 from the claim that Lysis' parents feel a strong *philia* for him to the claim that they "would like" for him "to be as happy as possible." Though it might be argued that the latter two examples are not cases of the specific sort of *philia* which interests us in a discussion of friendship, it seems reasonable to think that if *philia* is this somewhat wider sense implies such a concern for the well-being of its object, then *philia* in our narrower sense, as a specific variety of this broader kind of affection, will share this feature.

[137] This claim is implicit in Socrates' contentions in *Republic* V.462d6-e1 & V.464d3-4 that "whenever anything good or bad happens to a single one of its citizens" the people of the Kallipolis, and the guardians/ auxiliaries in particular, "will share in the pleasure or pain," and that they will all "as far as possible, feel pleasure and pain in unison," if we accept Vlastos' plausible reading of these features of the citizens' relationships with one another as intended to follow from the strong ties of *philia* which their way of life and upbringing are designed to foster among them (see Vlastos, 11-13, though I contest many of his more substantial claims as to the significance and nature of this *philia*).

[138] See, e.g., Socrates' claim in *Republic* III.412d4-5, that "Someone loves something most of all when he believes that the same things are advantageous to it as to himself," where the kind of 'love' in question is *philia*.

[139] See, e.g., the exchange between Socrates and Polemarchus in *Republic* I.334b7-335a3, beginning with Socrates' question "Speaking of friends, do you mean those a person believes to be good and useful to him, or those who actually are good and useful, even if he doesn't think they are?"(*Republic* I.334b7-c2).

[140] This is obviously a claim which requires more support, but this is not the place to argue it fully. I believe, however, that a case can be made for Plato's endorsement of several of the above claims on the basis of his arguments in *Republic* Books III-V, which I take to rely on these claims to support the proposedly unifying effects of the *philia* cultivated among the guardians/auxiliaries of the Kallipolis by their education and communal lifestyle. It is my hope to make this case in detail in a future paper.

shifts from primarily that of eros to primarily that of *philia* is also the point at which their relationship first acquires many of these features most closely associated with friendship.

And, one of the most crucial of these features, it seems, the acquisition of which marks one of the clearest breaks from any previous stage of their relationship, is reciprocity. Such reciprocity is emphasized as a defining feature of friendship in both Aristotle's brief discussion in the *Rhetoric*, above, and his more extended treatment of the different kinds of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. And, although Plato seems clearly to think that *philia*, as such, need not be reciprocal, since one might also have such 'friendly feeling' towards abstract or corporate entities such as wisdom or one's polis, which need not be capable of returning it,[141] it also seems quite plausible to think that he considers *philia* in the sense of 'friendship' to be a particular kind of *philia* in this broader sense, just as he has noted that the eros with which he is most centrally concerned in the palinode is that particular kind of eros which one feels towards other persons,[142] rather than towards any other thing. And just as this particular kind of eros has its own distinctive features, it seems reasonable to think that this particular kind of *philia* will as well. Aristotle, of course, will make this argument explicitly: that although one can use the word *philia* to mean many different things, even speaking of the 'love' some people have for inanimate objects, such as wine,[143] in this way, this is clearly not

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[141] At least, not presumably, although a case could be made that corporate entities such as a polis are capable of this.

[142] Specifically, towards 'beautiful boys,' by his initial characterization at *Phaedrus* 249e4 (see above, p.10) though, as we have seen, this characterization evolves significantly over the course of the palinode.

[143] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b27-32. Note, also, that this particular example, of the 'love of wine,' is one which had been previously used by Plato in the *Lysis*.

the sort of love we mean when we use the word *philia* in the more specific sense of 'friendship.' Rather, "friendship, people say, is good will between reciprocating parties,"[144] as well as, he will go on to argue, a mutual recognition of this good will by both parties, and appropriate actions taken accordingly. Furthermore, as Julia Annas has argued persuasively, it seems as though this same conclusion, that the sort of *philia* we mean when we use the word to pick out anything resembling 'friendship' will require reciprocity of feeling, is suggested by Plato's own, ostensibly aporetic, arguments in the *Lysis*.[145]

The first aporia which Socrates claims to have generated on the topic of friendship in the *Lysis* centers on the question of who should be considered a friend, the person who loves or feels friendly feeling for someone, or the person for whom such love or friendly feeling is felt. And this question is explicitly posed, at the outset, with respect to that love or friendly feeling which is felt towards other persons: "when someone loves someone else, which of the two becomes the friend of the other, the one who loves, or the one who is loved?"[146] Socrates quickly leads Menexenus, Lysis' closest friend, to agree that neither one who loves in this way without being so loved in return nor one who is so loved without also so loving can be rightly called a friend, since if either were the case, then one could easily become "a friend of a nonfriend, and even of an enemy"[147] or "an

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[144] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b33-34.

[145] Annas, 532-533.

[146] *Lysis* 212b1-2.

[147] *Lysis* 213c2.

enemy to a nonenemy, or even to a friend."[148] And this, Socrates maintains, "doesn't make any sense at all... it is simply impossible to be an enemy to one's friend and a friend to one's enemy,"[149] as Menexenus readily agrees. The clear implication of the intuition on which this conclusion rests, then, that one cannot be 'a friend of a nonfriend,' is that each party to a friendship must be a friend of the other, if there is to be any such thing as a friendship at all. And when Socrates suggests the claim that friendship must be reciprocal as a possible answer to their worry about who will be a friend, proposing that "unless they both love each other, neither is a friend"[150] so that "nothing is a friend of the lover unless it loves him in return,"[151] Menexenus is initially inclined to agree. He is lead to reject this claim only when Socrates introduces the question of whether one could then be truly said to be a 'friend' to the sorts of general or abstract things towards which one might be commonly said to feel *philia*, but which could not be reasonably said to feel it back:

> So, there are no horse-lovers unless the horses love them back, and no quail-lovers, dog-lovers, wine-lovers, or exercise-lovers. And no lovers of wisdom, unless wisdom loves them in return. But do people really love them even though these things are not their friends, making a liar of the poet who said:
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> *Happy the man who has as friends his children and*
> *solid-hoofed horses,*
> *his hunting hounds and a host abroad?*[152]

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[148] *Lysis* 213c-4.

[149] *Lysis* 213b2-4.

[150] *Lysis* 212d4.

[151] *Lysis* 212d6.

[152] *Lysis* 212d8-e6. This part of the argument may seems especially strange to us, since it relies on a largely verbal point that the common Greek words for such things as 'horse-lover,' etc., were compounds involving *philia*: 'horse-lovers' above is '*philippoi*,' for example, 'wine-lovers '*philoinoi*,' and 'lovers of wisdom' '*philosophoi*,' or 'philosophers.'

Menexenus responds that he doesn't think this poet was a liar, and so the suggestion is dismissed, and their arguments move on. Notice, though, that this claim is only brought under suspicion at all by the introduction of worries beyond the scope of the original question, which was specifically about which of two *people* was a friend, when one of them loved the other. And even once these worries have been raised, Socrates puts forward a suggestion as to how they might be plausibly resolved: that when people are lovers of horses, or of wine, or of wisdom, or of other such things, they do in fact love these things, and this love is *philia*, of a sort, but not of that sort which is friendship, and 'these things are not their friends.' The only real argument offered against the claim that friendship is reciprocal, then, is that if it were correct, the cited piece of poetry would fail to be literally true, thus 'making a liar of the poet.' While Menexenus may find this a convincing argument, it seems highly unlikely that we are meant to, given what we know of Plato's attitudes towards poetry. Moreover, Socrates goes on to rely, without further comment, on the presumption that friendship is reciprocal, and seemingly symmetrically so, in his own later arguments, which take it as given that friends must "be prized by each other"[153] "value each other"[154] and "yearn for one another when apart."[155] As Annas has pointed out,[156] these arguments clearly assume that to be a friend requires not only that one love, but also that one be loved, since, on the one hand, Socrates maintains that

[153] *Lysis* 215a2.

[154] *Lysis* 215b13.

[155] *Lysis* 215b11.

[156] Annas, 533.

"whoever doesn't love is not a friend,"[157] while, on the other, he asks Lysis,"how can anything be a friend if it is not prized?"[158] Clearly "it can't,"[159] Lysis promptly replies, since, as Socrates argues, whatever someone "didn't prize he wouldn't love."[160] It seems that the case can be plausibly made, then, that Plato would accept reciprocity as one of the defining features of personal friendship.

Again, then, it does not seem accidental that a shift in Plato's language, from primarily that of eros, to primarily that of *philia*, occurs at just that point in his account in the *Phaedrus* where the relationship between the lover and beloved first acquires any sort of reciprocity: the point at which the beloved first begins to feel affection for the lover, and chooses to allow him a place in his life as a trusted social intimate. That is, the point at which the beloved first ceases to be purely the object of the lover's unilateral eros, and becomes, also, an active participant in what we have called the 'pedagogical' stage of their relationship. Having come to see how genuinely the lover appears to desire to help and to benefit him, we should remember from our arguments above, the beloved eventually decides to let 'the man spend time with him.'[161] And he makes this decision, Plato argues, 'because he is by nature disposed to be a friend (*philos*) of the man who is serving him.'[162] He is so naturally 'disposed,' furthermore, towards those whom he

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[157] *Lysis* 215b8.

[158] *Lysis* 215a5.

[159] *Lysis* 215a6.

[160] *Lysis* 215b6.

[161] See above, p. 33; *Phaedrus* 255b1-2.

[162] See above, p. 33; *Phaedrus* 255a3-4.

believes to genuinely mean him well, it seems, even when he is *not* well disposed towards the prospect of an erotic relationship: "even if he has already been set against love by schoolfriends or others who say that it is shameful to associate with a lover."[163] And once he has allowed the lover to 'talk and spend time with him,'[164] he is even more deeply 'amazed'[165] by the extent of the genuine 'good will'[166] this person displays towards him in all of his behavior. And so he comes to realize, it seems, that this lover is not *only* a lover, and certainly not a 'lover' in the sense with which his 'schoolfriends' have no doubt made him familiar, a person who desires and pursues him with promises of benefit in order to win his favors, but who has no further interest in his well-being than this, the sort of lover criticized so effectively in Socrates' and Lysias' earlier speeches. Instead, he is a lover who is also a friend. And a friend, it seems, not independently of being a lover, but rather, as a consequence of being a lover, in that way which is most true to the divine nature of love: a 'friend (*philon*) who is inspired by a god.'[167] As he comes to know the lover and his true intentions well, then, he is shocked to discover 'that all the friendship he has from his other friends and relatives put together is nothing compared to'[168] the friendship of this lover who is also a friend. And notice, here, exactly where all of this language of 'friendship' begins to be deployed: the beloved is initially 'disposed'

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[163] *Phaedrus* 255a4.

[164] See above, p. 33; *Phaedrus* 255b4.

[165] See above, p. 33; *Phaedrus* 255b5.

[166] See above, p. 33; *Phaedrus* 255b5.

[167] See above, p. 34; *Phaedrus* 255b7.

[168] See above, pp. 33-34; *Phaedrus* 255b5-7.

to be a friend to the person who is 'serving' him, and so begins to take the time to come to know him better, and to better understand the motives he may have for doing all of these good things for him. This disposition seems to become a reality, though, and the lover begins to be spoken of not only as his lover, but also as his friend, at the point at which the beloved comes to be fully aware of the extent of the 'good will' which the lover feels for him. And 'good will,' here, is '*eunoia,*' the same 'good will' which we saw above in Aristotle's report that 'friendship, people say, is good will between reciprocating parties.'[169] Indeed, this 'pedagogical' stage of the relationship between the lover and beloved, as Plato describes it briefly here, seems to map fairly well onto one of the lesser sorts of friendship which Aristotle describes in his later account of the different kinds of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[170] For our purposes, though, we need only note here that several of the key features of friendship as Aristotle has argued above that many would define it, and as Plato himself seems to acknowledge that it might be plausibly defined, now seem to be in place between the lover and beloved, most crucially, reciprocity of both 'good will' and benefit.

The most significant break with all previous stages of their relationship, however, and the one on which Plato himself places the greatest emphasis, seems not to happen here, when the beloved enters into this 'pedagogical' relationship with the lover, but rather with the transition from this stage of their relationship to one of the two highest

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[169] See above, p. 71; *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.2 1155b33-34.

[170] Specifically, friendship between unequals because of excellence or the good, see *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.13 1162a34-1162b14, c.f. 8.8 1159a34-1159b8.

sorts of relationship in which Plato argues that eros can possibly result. The point at which the relationship between the lover and beloved is most drastically and significantly transformed seems clearly to be that at which the beloved in turn falls in love with the lover, and himself succeeds in correctly pursuing this love. It is the two sorts of relationship which can come from this transformation in the beloved's feelings for his lover, if he is able to correctly interpret and respond to them, which Plato argues will offer love's greatest rewards, those which are 'as great as divine gifts should be,'[171] and which cannot be offered by any earlier stage of their relationship. While what we have called the 'pedagogical' stage of their relationship may be pleasant, harmless, and even mildly spiritually or philosophically rewarding, if the full benefits of eros are to be gained, Plato argues, their relationship must progress beyond this stage. This might initially lead us to dismiss the importance of the emphasis on friendship which we see beginning to emerge in Plato's description of this earlier stage of the relationship. To do so, however, would be a mistake. This new emphasis on the element of friendship between the lover and beloved, which we see emerging here, with the shift in the beloved's role from that of a purely passive object, to that of an actively consenting, if still primarily receptive, participant, continues to be a significant feature of Plato's account of the two highest kinds of love, as the beloved's role shifts even further, from that of a primarily receptive participant, to that of a fully equal and active partner in a life lived together with the lover.

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[171] See above, p. 48; *Phaedrus* 256e4.

And it is in Plato's description of these two highest sorts of relationship in which eros can result that his shift to reliance on the language of *philia* become most telling. Though he relies again, as one would expect, primarily upon the language of eros in his description of the beloved's own experience of eros and his struggle to interpret and respond to it correctly, just as he had in describing the original lover's experience, once the beloved has emerged from this struggle largely victorious, as the original lover had, now able, as the original lover eventually was, to express his love with the appropriate 'reverence and awe,' Plato's emphasis on the language of *philia* returns. In the few lines describing the highest possible sort of relationship to which eros can lead, that of the 'philosophical pair,' who 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy' and live a life of 'bliss and shared understanding' on this earth, growing wings together after death, neither the language of *philia* nor that of eros is explicitly used.[172] When Plato turns to describing the second best sort of relationship, however, that of those who waver from this highest possible course of eros by putting 'ambition in place of philosophy,'[173] he does so in terms of *philia*, while maintaining that this aspect of the description applies even more appropriately to the best sort of relationship than to this lesser one: 'these two also live in mutual friendship (though weaker than that of the philosophical pair), both while they are in love and after they have passed beyond it.'[174] Those engaged in the highest sort of relationship to which eros can lead, then, the 'philosophical pair,' now

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[172] See above, p. 45; *Phaedrus* 256a7-b7.

[173] See above, p. 47; *Phaedrus* 256c1.

[174] See above, p. 47; *Phaedrus* 256c7-d1.

'live in mutual friendship,' just as this lesser pair does, but their friendship is stronger than that of this less 'philosophical' pair, and, presumably, just as, or even more, lasting. Most surprisingly, then, it seems to follow from this claim, in the case of the second-best sort of relationship at least, and most likely in that of the best sort as well, that this 'mutual friendship,' though born of eros, no longer depends on eros for its continued strength and stability: though the friendship begins 'while they are in love,' it can continue, undiminished, even 'after they have passed beyond it.'

Moreover, the benefits conferred by this final stage of the relationship in either its best or its second-best form, in both this life and the afterlife, seem not to be attendant upon the continuation of eros, which may or may not persist, between the members of each 'pair,' after this stage in their relationship has been achieved, but rather upon this lasting and 'mutual friendship' which their shared experience of eros has forged. These two highest sorts of personal relationship, then, which Plato has argued will grant human beings the greatest possible benefits, are only indifferently erotic, after they have been attained. The importance of eros to this process, it seems, is largely as the means of attaining them. The benefits conferred by the highest sorts of life lived together, then, as such, are the benefits conferred by the highest sorts of friendship, not just the highest

sorts of love.[175] And though such friendship may *also* be erotic, as time moves forward, it need not be. Nothing of significance is lost should the passion which brought these pairs together burn out. And, in the final passage of the palinode, where Socrates concludes his praise of love by returning briefly to the topic of the 'non-lover' of Lysias' speech, to contrast the paucity of what such a person can offer with the rich possibilities of a rightly pursued love, he does so, quite pointedly, in the language of friendship. While the sexually motivated quid-pro-quo of a "non-lover's companionship (*oikeiotes*)"[176] he argues, can provide nothing more than "cheap, human dividends,"[177] all

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[175] I have made a slide, over the course of this paragraph, from speaking of the two highest forms of relationship in which eros can result to speaking of the two highest forms of relationship, full stop, and from claiming that these two highest forms of relationship in which eros can result are friendships to claiming that these two forms of friendship are friendship's highest forms. While the reader would be right to be suspicious of this slide, no slight of hand is intended. I take these two moves to be justified to the following extent: although Plato does not explicitly claim that these two sorts of relationship are the highest sorts of personal relationship possible, he has argued that they are the sorts of personal relationship which provide the individuals engaged in them with the greatest possible benefits. And these are not only the greatest possible benefits which personal relationships can provide, he has claimed, but the greatest possible benefits which *anything* can provide to an embodied human being. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to think, given what has been argued, that Plato is attributing relative value to different sorts of personal relationship on the basis of two factors: 1) the benefits which they provide to their participants and 2) the intrinsically valuable and disvaluable features they possess. If this is correct, then it seems that in order for any sort of personal relationship to be a 'higher' one, in his estimation, than the two highest sorts of relationship described in the palinode, it would need to be so on the basis of some intrinsically more valuable or less disvaluable features it possessed, while still providing its participants with the same benefits as these two highest sorts of relationship resulting from eros. The defining features of these two highest sorts of relationship which Plato describes, however, would seem to be the very features which allow them to provide these benefits to their participants. While it is conceivable, then, that there might be other sorts of personal relationship or friendship which provided these same benefits to their participants on Plato's view, it seems that these other sorts of relationship or friendship would need to resemble the two highest sorts of relationship described in the palinode in all of the defining features which we have discussed in order to do so. It seems reasonable, then, to move forward under the assumption that the highest forms of friendship, on his view, if not identical to those described here in the palinode, will at the very least resemble them in all of the immediately relevant respects.

[176] *Phaedrus* 256e4-5: τοῦ μὴ ἐρῶντος οἰκειότης.

[177] *Phaedrus* 256e6.

of the ‘divine gifts’ detailed in the palinode can be rightly hoped for from “a lover’s friendship (*philia*).”[178]

[178] *Phaedrus* 256e3: ἐραστοῦ φιλία.

VIII. Friendship in its Highest Forms

It seems that this final account of the two highest sorts of relationship in which *eros* can result, then, is not only an account of the best sorts of erotic relationship, but also of the best sorts of personal friendship. And given that it seems, from what we have said above, that the erotic and sexual elements of these two sorts of relationship have become largely indifferent, with their continuation or cessation having little effect upon the benefits offered to the participants in them by their continuing relations with each other, once this stage of their relationship has been reached, it seems that we should now ask what the features of these best kinds of relationship are, independently of the distinctively erotic characteristics which they may or may not continue to have. And if we examine the features of these two sorts of relationship as friendships, keeping in place all of the features they have come to have through the historical process of their participants' *eros*, but abstracting away from anything exclusively erotic in their ongoing relationships with each other, we will find ourselves facing a surprisingly familiar description of the best sorts of personal friendship.

We will find, that is, that these two sorts of relationship, considered as friendships, share nearly all of the features most closely associated with the best sort of personal friendship described in Aristotle's account in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although the exact characteristics of this best sort of friendship, often referred to as 'virtue friendship' or 'character friendship' are widely debated, there are number of defining features, some shared with other kinds of friendship, and some unique to this one best kind, which are

generally taken to be central to Aristotle's account. First of all, as we have already discussed somewhat above, all kinds of friendship, on Aristotle's view, and so this best kind as well, require some sort of "reciprocal loving of which both parties are aware,"[179] and a corresponding reciprocal good will or desire for the good of the other, on which each party is prepared to act wherever possible and appropriate.[180] In every kind of friendship, then, and in this best kind as well, each party will provide, or at the very least desire and attempt to provide, some good or benefit to the other. In the case of this best kind of friendship, moreover, as in the case of many of the other broadly better kinds of friendship, that which each party provides to the other, and so that which each of them receives from the relationship, will also be of the same kind of good or benefit, and to a roughly similar degree. In these better kinds of friendship, then, and so in the best kind of friendship in particular, there will be both a qualitative and a quantitative equality in the benefits offered to each of the participants, so that "in all respects each party gets the same or similar things from the other, which is an attribute friendship should have."[181] Furthermore in the best kind of friendship, as it seems is not the case in any of the other kinds of friendship on Aristotle's account, each of the friends is also himself, in his own person, a good and a benefit to the other, "for the good person, in becoming a friend, becomes a good for the person to whom he becomes a friend,"[182] "for the good are both

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[179] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156a8-9.

[180] Although the nature and extent of this good will will vary among types of friendship, on Aristotle's view.

[181] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1156b34-35.

[182] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.5 1157b33-35.

good without qualification and of benefit to one another,"[183] and Aristotle will argue at length that the parties to this best kind of friendship must always themselves be good.

That such friends are a good to one another in this way is also a consequence of another unique feature of this best kind of friendship: that it, unlike any of the other kinds of friendship, is a mutual love based exclusively upon the features of the friends' own characters, independently of any of their incidental traits, such as wealth, influence, or charm. Such friendships based exclusively upon the friends' own characters, Aristotle argues, must be built, at least in large part, on a mutual admiration and respect felt by each party for the other on account of his personal virtue or excellence: "being friends because of excellence, and because of what the parties are in themselves"[184] each friend will love the other "by reference to the person he is."[185] In this way "the good will be friends because of themselves; for they will be friends in so far as they are good."[186] Those who have truly bad characters, on the other hand, are unable to create or maintain such friendships on the basis of their characters alone, and "it is clear that the only ones who are friends because of themselves are the good; for the bad get no gratification from each other,"[187] except incidentally. Because such friends are friends 'because of themselves,' furthermore, and love one another because of their own most stable and

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[183] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b13-14.

[184] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.10 1171a18-19.

[185] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156a18.

[186] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157b3-4.

[187] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157a19-20.

lasting qualities, the friendships they forge on this basis will also be stable and lasting ones. While other sorts of friendship, and particularly, Aristotle argues, the traditional sorts of "erotic friendships"[188] characterized by the exchange of very different sorts of goods between very different and unequal parties, will be unstable and quick to dissolve, unlikely to last over the course of a lifetime, "friendships based on character – being for their own sake – do last,"[189] "for since their own attributes are lasting, so is their relationship to each other."[190]

It is not, however, only virtue or excellence of character, assessed absolutely, on which such relationships are based, but rather, Aristotle argues, equality or similarity in such virtue or excellence. It is always, he maintains, to some extent true that "'equality and similarity make amity', and most of all the similarity of those similar in excellence,"[191] and so "it is the friendship between good people, those resembling each other in excellence"[192] that will be the most "complete"[193] and the best. It is not only excellence of character, then, that brings such friends together, but also *similarity* of character: "for every kind of friendship is because of some good or because of pleasure, ...and in virtue of some sort of resemblance between the parties, and to this kind of friendship belong all the attributes mentioned, in virtue of what the friends are in

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[188] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.1 1164a3.

[189] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.1 1164a12.

[190] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.8 1159b5.

[191] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.8 1159b3-4.

[192] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b7-8.

[193] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b8.

themselves, since in this respect they are similar."[194] And this similarity of character between friends of the best sort will be manifested in their sharing of the same values, aims, and pursuits, and of the same sorts of activity in which they take the greatest pleasure, and upon which they place the greatest emphasis in their lives, "for nothing is so characteristic of friends as living together... but it is not possible for people to spend their time with each other if they are not pleasant, and do not enjoy the same things."[195] So, while "like-mindedness too is evidently a feature of friendship,"[196] and can be found to various extents in other kinds of friendship as well, it is notable in particular that "this sort of like-mindedness is found among decent people, ...both with themselves and with each other, ... they have the same objectives... and they wish for what is just and what is advantageous, and also make these their common aim."[197] It will be most natural and easiest, then, for the good and the decent to 'live together' in the way that close friends desire, and, furthermore, most mutually beneficial for them to do so, since those activities which they value most highly and devote themselves to most consistently will be virtuous ones, which will in turn help to maintain and develop their virtue of character, "and whatever it is that for each sort of person constitutes existence, or whatever it is for the sake of which they choose to live, it's this they wish to spend time doing in company with

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[194] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3 1156b19-23.

[195] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.5 1157b19-24.

[196] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.6 1167a22.

[197] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.6 1167b4-9.

their friends... each kind spending their days together in doing whichever of the things in life most satisfies them."[198]

This best sort of friendship, then, will both require and foster a deep knowledge and understanding of each friend's character by the other, if each is to love the other for the sake of his character, and to be right in doing so. And so, "this type of friendship also requires that the parties have acquired experience of each other, and a close acquaintance with one another's character, which is very difficult to achieve."[199] This knowledge of each other's character will naturally grow over the course of their friendship with each other as well, as they spend their time "living together, conversing, and sharing their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by 'living together' where human beings are concerned."[200] This knowledge of each other's character, in turn, will foster not only love, but also trust, between them, since they will know one another to be both good and trustworthy, with the confidence one rightly has in one's judgements "about a person one has scrutinized oneself over a long period."[201] It will also allow each of them to offer greater help, comfort, and pleasure to the other than they would have been able to do without the aid of this knowledge, since in all of their conversations with and actions towards each other they "will know the character of the person affected, and the things

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[198] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.12 1171b37-1172a6.

[199] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.6 1158a14-16.

[200] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.9 1170b12-14.

[201] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.4 1157a22-23.

that give him pleasure and pain,"[202] and choose the most appropriate course accordingly. Moreover, through their interactions they will not only come to know each other's characters well, but will also gain insight into their own characters, and develop both their own and their friend's virtue further through emulation of one another's better qualities and correction of one another's failings, as well as through shared endeavor towards virtuous activity: "for the good man, in so far as he is good, delights in actions in accordance with excellence, and is disgusted by those flowing from badness,"[203] so that good men who are friends "become better by being active and correcting each other, for they take each other's imprint in those respects in which they please one another."[204]

If we have made our case well, then each of these defining features of Aristotle's much-discussed 'character friendship' should by this time find an obvious parallel among those which have emerged from our analysis of the evolving relationships between Plato's two most successful 'pairs' of lovers or friends in the *Phaedrus*. Furthermore, on at least one plausible reading of Aristotle's claim that a friend of this best sort "is to his friend as he is to himself (for his friend is another self),"[205] such that "friendship in its superior form resembles one's love for oneself,"[206] this will also be true of the parties to these two highest kinds of relationship in the palinode. Insofar as they are of the same

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[202] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.11 1171b4-5.

[203] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.9 1170a8-10.

[204] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.12 1172a12-14.

[205] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4 1166a31-32.

[206] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.4 1166b1-2.

character, share the same aspirations, know one another's souls as they know their own, desire the same goods for one another that they desire for themselves, take pleasure in one another's goods and successes in the way that they take pleasure in their own, and consider one another's goods integral to their own well-being in much the same way as those goods which accrue to them more directly, each of the members of Plato's two 'pairs' of friends or lovers will love and relate to the other in much the same way that he does himself.[207]

There is a crucial element of Aristotle's account of the best kind of friendship, however, which is conspicuously absent from these two best kinds of friendship as described by Plato. As we saw above, in Aristotle's initial definition of friendship in the *Rhetoric,* he makes a point of claiming that when you are truly a friend to someone, you desire that which you believe to be good for that person 'not for your own sake but for his,' and this apparent contrast, between that which one desires for one's own sake, and that which one desires for the sake of one's friend, is generally taken to be a central element of his account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well.[208] We have already seen this aspect of his account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* appear above in his recounting of what 'people take a friend to be': someone who wishes the good, or apparent good, of his friend 'for the sake of the other,' or 'for the friend's own sake.' This provision appears elsewhere in the account as well, and often in the context of the

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[207] And this point might bear even more emphasis if one is drawn to the first reading offered above of the way in which the original beloved might be said to see himself in his lover 'as in a mirror.'

[208] See, e.g. Vlastos, 3-6; Whiting.

ways in which the best kind of friends' love for one another is like the love which they have for themselves, for example, in the claim that "the one who is most a friend is the friend who wishes good things for the one for whom he wishes them, for the other's sake, even if no one will know; and these features belong most to oneself in relation to oneself...."[209] Though we have seen, then, that Aristotle sometimes uses similar wording in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to mean something very different from what it would appear to mean in the *Rhetoric* passage, as when he claims above, for example, that the love which one feels for one's friends is 'for their own sake' when it is 'based on character,' insofar as one then loves them 'because of themselves,' and so 'for the sake of' the persons who they most essentially are, it seems clear that he also deploys this sort of wording in a sense very much like that with which he used it in the *Rhetoric*.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, then, there seem to be (at least) two importantly different senses of 'for their own sake' at work in Aristotle's account.[210] On the one hand, there is a sense of 'for their own sake' in play with which the natural contrast would be something like 'for the sake of their political connections,' or 'for the sake of their dinner parties,' or even, it seems, 'for the sake of their pleasant sense of humor.'

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[209] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.8 1168b2-5.

[210] For helpful discussion of the different ways in which Aristotle employs this expression (and the several Greek expressions it commonly translates) in his accounts of friendship see Michael Pakaluk. *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction*. (New York: Cambridge U.P., 2005) 263-271; Kelly Rogers. "Aristotle on Loving Another for His Own Sake." *Phronesis*, 39.3 (1994): 291-302, especially 291-293; Whiting, 283-287; & Jennifer Whiting. "Eudaimonia, External Results, and Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 65.2 (Sep. 2002): 274-276. See also Jennifer Whiting. "Impersonal Friends." *The Monist*, 74.1 (Jan. 1991): 3-29, where I take one significant thread in her argument to be that these seemingly different uses of the expression are in fact much more closely related than they initially appear.

Here, it seems that 'for the sake of' is being used to pick out those things about the friends in question on account of which one feels affection for them or chooses to be their friend, those things about them by which one is motivated to pursue or maintain a friendship with them. And in *this* sense of 'for their own sake' it seems that the two best sorts of friendship which we see in the *Phaedrus* are as much 'for the friend's own sake' as Aristotle's own best kind of friendship, insofar as these two best sorts of friendship are equally based on the most essential aspects of each party's own character. But there is also a sense of 'for the friend's own sake' in play in the *Ethics* which, as in the *Rhetoric*, invites a contrast, instead, with that which is 'for *your* own sake,' or perhaps even 'for the sake of' other people or entities in which one takes an interest, such as one's family or polis.[211] This sense of 'for the sake of' would seem to be indicating something more like the person (or entity) on whose behalf, or for whose benefit, one takes oneself to act, or to feel, as one does. And it is *this* sense of the claim that one's goodwill or love for one's friend, in the best kind of friendship, must be 'for the friend's own sake,' with its implied contrast, which brings into play the much fraught debate over the respective roles of 'egoism' and 'altruism' in Aristotle's theory of friendship, and in the ethics of friendship in general, and the related (and sometimes conflated) debate over whether the best sort of friend, either in Aristotle's theory or in matter of ethical fact, may value his friend's good, or even his friend, instrumentally, or only as a final good. Though this is a debate too sweeping to engage with in any detail here, it is worth noting, I think, that Plato does not

[211] See, e.g., acting "for the sake of" one's "fatherland" at *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.8 1169a20.

feel the need to explicitly draw such a contrast in the *Phaedrus*, despite drawing a very clear distinction between those who genuinely do desire the good of those for whom they feel eros, and those who are merely willing to promote that good insofar as it is an effective means to achieving their other desires, without taking any further interest in it. And, while this is a point which would likely require its own paper to argue convincingly, I would like to at least suggest here that this difference between Plato's approach and Aristotle's is not an insignificant one. Nor, I think, does it reflect a simple failure on Plato's part to consider a problem of which Aristotle was more fully aware.

I would like to suggest, rather, that Plato's lack of attention to this question in the *Phaedrus* is tied to his commitment elsewhere to the claim that final and instrumental value are by no means incompatible, and, furthermore, that a given individual may simultaneously value a given thing both instrumentally and as an end, without his ascription to it of one kind of value in any way diminishing his ascription to it of the other. In fact, as one may recall from the well-known passages in Book II of his *Republic*, Plato has seemed to endorse the view that "the finest goods,"[212] those which we both do and should value most highly, are of the "kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it – knowing, for example, and seeing.... We welcome such things, I suppose, on both counts."[213] He will go on, in the *Republic*, to argue that justice, and all the other virtues, are of this kind of good: such that we naturally

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[212] *Republic* II.358a1.

[213] *Republic* II.357b9-c2.

value them both for their own sake and for the sake of their consequences, that is, both as final an as instrumental goods. And to value things in this way, it seems, is on his view to value them *more* highly, not less so, than those things to which we ascribe exclusively final value, such as "joy... and all the harmless pleasures that have no results beyond the joy of having them."[214] If we take this claim seriously, then, it seems that much of the debate over how one should value the friend and his good, and, consequently, the related debate over the roles of egoism and altruism in such relationships, will need to be re-framed in a Platonic context. And, by taking this claim seriously, we can begin to see a principled motivation for the seemingly curious lack of priority in the various goods of the world of the soul depicted in the palinode, where, as we have seen, each of the central goods in the soul's unembodied existence would seem to be treated simultaneously as an independently desirable end and as a means to the achievement and maintenance of the others, as well as for the corresponding lack of clear priority in Plato's depiction of the lover's motivations for pursuing a relationship with his beloved.

We may also, I think, begin to see a response to yet another of the supposed aporiai about friendship generated by Socrates in the *Lysis*. How can it be, he there asks Menexenus, that anyone or anything can be truly called a 'friend,' except for "some first principle,"[215] "for the sake of which we say that all the rest are friends too."[216] If

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[214] *Republic* II.357b5-7.

[215] *Lysis* 219d1.

[216] *Lysis* 219d2-3.

"whoever is a friend.... has to be a friend to someone.... for the sake of something,"[217] he argues, and this 'something' will itself be a 'friend' as well, then "the friend is friend of its friend for the sake of a friend,"[218] and this regress can hardly go on forever. So, eventually, some "first friend"[219] must be reached, "which will no longer bring us back to another friend."[220] But wouldn't it then be the case, he suggests, that "all the other things that we have called friends for the sake of that thing may be deceiving us, like so many phantoms of it, and that it is the first thing which is truly a friend?"[221] If this picture has things right, he argues, then "the real friend is surely that in which all these so-called friendships terminate,"[222] in which case "the real friend is not a friend for the sake of a friend."[223] Rather, it seems, it will turn out that only the good itself is a 'real friend,' since only the good is not "prized and loved"[224] for the sake of any other thing. To reach this conclusion, however, Socrates has implicitly generated a dichotomy between that which is 'prized and loved' as a final good, and that which is 'prized and loved' as an instrumental good or 'for the sake of' some other thing, such that Menexenus is led to infer that these two ways of loving or valuing any given thing are mutually exclusive and

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[217] *Lysis* 218d5-9.

[218] *Lysis* 219b4.

[219] *Lysis* 219d2.

[220] *Lysis* 219d1-2.

[221] *Lysis* 219d5-8.

[222] *Lysis* 220b2-3.

[223] *Lysis* 220b5.

[224] *Lysis* 220d3.

exhaustive.[225] If we take the above claim from *Republic* Book II, seriously, however, then this is a dichotomy that Plato rejects. And without this dichotomy, the supposed aporia which Socrates goes on to generate from the conclusion that only the good is a friend will fail to follow. We have several good reasons, then, it seems, to give this claim further attention in the context of Plato's views on interpersonal friendship and love.

[225] The example which Socrates deploys to secure Menexenus' agreement that we do not in fact love those things which we 'love' for the sake of something else, but only that thing for the sake of which we love them, is of items clearly valued *exclusively* as means or instrumental goods: the wine which a man believes will save his poisoned son, and the wineskin and cup required to administer it (*Lysis* 219d8-220a2). It seems clear in this example that the man *truly* loves only his son, not the wine, wineskin, or cup, and Socrates leads Menexenus to generalize from this intuition to the claim that nothing is truly loved if it is loved for the sake of something else, presumably by way of an implicit conflation of the claim that that which is loved for the sake of something else is not truly loved with the claim that that which is loved *only* for the sake of something else is not truly loved. But this latter move can only be valid on the assumption that all things which are loved for the sake of something else are loved *only* for the sake of something else, an assumption which we have seen that we have reason to think Plato rejects. Furthermore, Socrates' use of a man's love for his son as the example of 'true' love in this case serves to highlight the problem with this assumption in the context of the *Lysis* as a whole, since his initial conversation with Lysis had seemed to suggest that fathers (and mothers), in particular, should be taken to love their sons for the sake of other things.

IX. The Philosophical Friends

Leaving aside, for the moment, though, discussion of the ways in which Plato's two highest sorts of friend in the *Phaedrus* may or may not be said to love each other 'for the sake of the other,' or to wish one another's good 'for the friend's own sake,' it seems that a different contrast with Aristotle's later account may offer us a useful insight into the nature of these two highest relationships described by Plato. Although both of these two highest sorts of relationship on Plato's account share nearly all of the most important features of Aristotle's 'character friendship,' and, it seems, to an equivalent extent, on Aristotle's account the possession of these features is treated as sufficient to identify a friendship as one of the highest possible sort, while on Plato's account one of these two kinds of friendships is seen as significantly superior to the other, not only in quality, but in kind. And this is because, Plato has argued, although both of these friendships share all of the features we have noted in common with Aristotle's 'character friendship,' as well as the others which we have briefly discussed above, in the highest kind of friendship the pair of friends 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy' in their life lived together, whereas in the second-best kind they instead have 'ambition in place of philosophy,' as in some sense filling the same central role. And this single difference, it seems, is conceived of as deeply affecting the overall natures of these two kinds of friendship, despite all the rest they have in common. Plato's explanation of this crucial difference, however, is frustratingly brief. What are we to take it to *mean*, for the nature of these two kinds of friendship, that the parties engaged in them 'follow ... philosophy,'

or put ambition in its place? What exactly *is* the 'place' of philosophy in the life of the 'philosophical pair,' which is somehow usurped by 'ambition' in the lesser pair's case? While there does also seem to be a difference in the centrality of the specifically sexual aspects of these two pairs' relationships, Plato casts this difference as a *consequence* of the difference between the roles that philosophy and ambition play in their respective lives together, and the resultant differences in their personal characters, rather than in any way a *cause* of the important differences between their two relationships or ways of life. If we are to find an explanation for the superiority of one of these kinds of friendship to the other, then, it seems that we must look for it in the respective roles philosophy and ambition play in the shared lives of the friends.

As a first attempt we might take the claim that the 'philosophical pair' 'follow the assigned regimen of philosophy' to mean that they live their shared life together in that way which is 'assigned' by philosophy, that is, in that way in which philosophy dictates or directs that they should do. To say this much, however, does little to reduce the ambiguity implicit in the claim, since there are still at least two fairly obvious interpretations we might give of what this means. On the one hand, we might take it to mean that they live their life together in accordance with a 'regimen' the specifications of which are contained in or implied by philosophy, where 'philosophy' is conceived of as a body of knowledge from which practical rules or recommendations for conduct can be drawn or inferred. On this reading Plato would be claiming that the 'philosophical pair' live their lives in accordance with a 'regimen' dictated by philosophy in much the same

way in which we might ordinarily say that someone lives his life in accordance with a 'regimen' dictated by medicine, that is, according to that way of life which medicine, understood as a body of knowledge both containing and implying certain practical rules or recommendations, tells him, or allows him to see for himself, is the best or most appropriate way for him to live. One might think, then, on this reading of the claim, that for the 'philosophical pair' to live in accordance with the 'regimen of philosophy,' is simply for them to live their life in that way which is prescribed for them as best by the new knowledge of themselves and their place in the cosmos which they have gained through their revelatory recollections and experience of eros. If this is the way we should read the claim, however, then it seems that the majority of the important progress which the 'philosophical pair' will make during their time spent together has already *been* made by the that time they have reached this final stage of their relationship, during the initial, turbulent, course of their eros. It is through this process, after all, of their initial erotic 'possession' and struggle to make sense of and respond to it correctly, that they have come to have their transformational insights into the natures of their own souls, the souls of the gods, and the world of the perfectly real beings, as well as to forge the psychic concord in themselves which will allow them to reliably implement the lessons of these insights in the course of their future lives. Viewed in this way, the continuing relationship between the 'philosophical pair' after this final stage of their relationship has been reached looks relatively unimportant, more like an extended period of resting on their laurels won in love than like a highly laudable or fruitful form of interaction in its own

right. The philosophical and ethical significance of their lifelong friendship, then, would seem to be secondary, on this reading, to that of the briefer period of intense eros through which it was formed. Even if we leave aside, however, the more general question of whether it would be appropriate to think of 'philosophy,' in the context of the *Phaedrus*, in this way, as referring to a given body of knowledge which one might come to have through various philosophical activities, reading the claim in this way would leave us with a much more obvious problem: if the 'place' of 'philosophy' in the life of this highest pair of friends is that of a newly-learned body of knowledge from which they can infer practical guidance as to how to live their lives, then in what plausible sense could 'ambition' come to occupy this 'place'? 'Ambition' would hardly seem to be the sort of thing which could be thought of as constituting a body of knowledge, analogous to medicine or other such arts, from which one might draw or infer practical guidance. If we are to preserve the parallel which Plato draws, then, between the 'place' of philosophy in the life of the 'philosophical pair' and that of 'ambition' in the life of the lesser pair of friends, then it seems we must read this claim in a different way.

Fortunately, the second most obvious way in which we might read this claim seems more promising in this respect. And this second reading would also seem to be suggested by the language of the passage itself. The word translated as 'ambition' in the passage above is '*philotimia*,' which could also be translated as 'love of honor,' just as 'philosophy' could be translated as 'love of wisdom.' The parallel roles which 'philosophy' and 'ambition' play in the lives of the greater and lesser pair of friends, then,

are each being played by a certain kind of love, and, moreover, by a certain kind of *philia*. Where 'ambition' has taken the place of 'philosophy' in the lives of the lesser pair of friends, then, what has happened would seem to be much more clear: the role most appropriately played in the life of the friends by the love of wisdom has come to be played by the love of honor instead, and so the same 'place' which the love of wisdom fills in the life of the best kind of friends has come to be occupied by the love of honor in the lesser pair's case. On this sort of reading, it seems, 'philosophy' is not meant to refer to a body of knowledge and its associated applications, but rather to something much more like a system of values or motivations, in much the same way that 'ambition' typically does. And this reading would be very much in holding with the sorts of claims we are accustomed to hearing from Plato's Socrates, that to be a philosopher is to value, love, and pursue wisdom, rather than to have it entirely. [226] The way in which 'philosophy' directs the best pair of friends towards its 'assigned regimen' in their life together, then, would be less analogous to the way in which we might ordinarily say that something like medicine does this than the way in which we might ordinarily say that something like health-consciousness does. Just as the love of health and desire to be healthy would lead the individuals who had it to live their lives in certain ways, according to that 'regimen' which they took to best advance them in the pursuit of their goal of good health, both for themselves and, potentially, for others, the love of wisdom, or of honor, would likewise lead the individuals who had them to live their lives in those ways, or

[226] See, e.g., *Phaedrus* 278d4-6; *Lysis* 218a4-b3.

according to those 'regimens,' which they took to best advance them in their pursuits of wisdom and of honor, respectively. The 'place' of philosophy in the lives of the best kind of friends, then, would be that of a shared value, aim, or guiding principle, according to the pursuit and glorification of which they ordered and organized their shared life together. The crucial difference between the best and the second-best kinds of friendship, then, would be a difference in the highest shared value, the shared passion, pursuit, or project, according to which these two respective kinds of friends organized their common life. Where the shared life of the 'philosophical pair' would be one devoted to a common passion for and collaborative pursuit of wisdom, the shared life of the lesser pair would be one devoted to a common passion for and collaborative pursuit of honor instead.[227]

And on this reading it does not seem to be the case that the most important work of the friends' lives together has already been done by the time that they reach this highest stage of their relationship. Rather, the benefits offered by the course of their eros have provided them with the foundations on which to build, in the best of such friendships, an ongoing, collaborative, pursuit of wisdom, throughout the rest of their lives and beyond. Their revelatory recollections of the worlds of the souls and the perfectly real beings have provided them with a desire for wisdom which they had formerly lacked (or at least failed to consciously recognize) by offering them a new awareness of the existence of a world of pure truth beyond the margins of their ordinary

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[227] Plato does not specifically address in the *Phaedrus* what such a shared life of pursing honor might be like, in contrast to that of pursuing philosophy. It is an interesting question to ask, however, since this account would seem to imply that such a life would not be a bad one, and might very well be positively virtuous in many ways, although inferior to that of the philosophical pair. I hope to explore this question further in a future paper.

experience, as well as of their own capacity to know this world through the direct perceptions of their unembodied souls and their resulting ability to recollect its truths during their current, embodied, lives, while simultaneously opening their eyes to the otherworldly joys of their unembodied souls and so to their own deep and inborn desires to draw as close as they possibly can to the truths and perfections of these transcendent worlds. The psychic concord which they have created and learned to maintain through their successful struggles with the initial violence of their eros, moreover, has provided them with the stability of character and rule of reason in their souls which they will need if they are to reliably follow the courses of action and overall way of life towards which the rational parts of their souls direct them as those most conducive to their pursuit of wisdom, as well as most in holding with the demands of wisdom itself, insofar as they may come to have it, and with the honor and respect which they owe to wisdom, in all of its manifestations, as something they both value highly and know to be 'divine.' In addition to this newfound understanding of and desire for wisdom, furthermore, and the necessary stability and responsiveness of soul required in order to pursue this newfound desire, their experiences of eros have also provided them with two further resources on which to rely in their ongoing pursuit of wisdom: the first of these, in holding with what has been gradually emerging as a unifying theme in the *Phaedrus*, is the insight they have been granted into the natures of their own individual souls, both as souls of a given type, and as particularly positioned instances of that type, and the second, it now seems

plausible to claim, is the partner and aid in the project of philosophy which they have gained in the person of their lover turned friend.

X. Friendship and the Nature of Philosophy

But here we come up against what would appear to be a confusion in our argument. Haven't we argued above that the 'philosophical' type of soul is one among the immutable 'divine' types into which souls are to be divided according to the god 'in whose chorus they danced' in heaven? Are not the 'philosophers' among us, that is, to be identified not with the most accomplished of the souls belonging to each of these 'divine' types of soul, as it seems that our 'philosophical pair' are, but rather with the most accomplished among those souls who are naturally followers of Zeus? Fortunately for our argument, it seems that the answer to this question is both more complex, and much more interesting, than we might initially be led to expect. It would seem, in fact, that Plato's account in the *Phaedrus* provides us with two different senses in which human beings might be rightly called philosophers: first if they are true lovers and pursuers of wisdom, as the members of our 'philosophical pair' now are, and, second, if they are both this and practitioners of the art of dialectic, which constitutes the most systematic and universal means of effecting such pursuit. It is in the second sense, I would like to claim, that only the most accomplished followers of Zeus are properly to be called philosophers, while in the first sense a sufficiently accomplished soul of any of the many 'divine' types may also deserve this name.

Recall, above, in our discussion of the ways in which the beloved might initially come to see 'himself in the lover as in a mirror,' the parallel we drew between the activity of the lover during the early, 'pedagogical,' stage of their relationship, and the activity of

which Plato has argued, in the second half of the *Phaedrus,* that true rhetoric, insofar as there is such a thing, must be the art: that of 'directing the soul by means of speech.' We had begun, in that discussion, to see a unifying theme emerging between the discussion of love in the first part of the *Phaedrus* and the discussion of rhetoric in its second part: an emphasis on the crucial importance to both of these endeavors of the knowledge of souls. While both the successful progress of their love and the advancement of their own personal virtue depends, for the lovers, in large part on the developing insight into the natures of their own and one another's souls which they have gained through their experience of love, the art of the true rhetorician, by Plato's later arguments, can only be the art of understanding the natures of *all* human souls – their various types and the ways in which these types will manifest themselves in the behavior of individuals here in this world – and so the ways in which various individuals will respond, in various contexts, to various kinds of attempts at persuasion. The true rhetorician, that is, must, on this view, be an expert psychologist, able to deeply understand, and so to effectively 'direct,' or manipulate, the soul of any individual whom he encounters. The successful lover, on the other hand, must possess only a very specific portion of the knowledge and skill which the true rhetorician must have: he must understand the natures and particular manifestations not of all types of souls and their many variations, but only of that one type of soul which he and his beloved share, and the ways in which it manifests in their two particular cases. It seems, however, as though this parallel between the art of the true rhetorician and the activity of our successful lovers has been gradually effaced as they

have moved beyond this 'pedagogical' stage of their relationship and into the equal partnership in life which they now share. The parallel between the activity of the true lover and the art of the true rhetorician, that is, would seem to depend in large part upon the asymmetry between the lover and beloved which has now disappeared. The true lover, during the pedagogical stage of their relationship, 'directed' the soul of his beloved towards greater understanding and virtue on the basis of the knowledge which he himself had newly gained through his experience of love, but which the beloved did not yet share. Once the beloved has himself become a lover, however, and achieved a position of parity with the original lover in respect to such knowledge, it seems that the time for unilateral 'directing' is over. Once the pair have reached this stage of their relationship, however, it seems that we can start to see an even more important parallel beginning to emerge: that between the activity in which the 'philosophical pair' are now engaged together, and the activity of which dialectic is the art.

True rhetoric, Plato has Socrates argue in the second half of the *Phaedrus*, the art of 'directing the soul by means of speech,' is an art that can only be fully mastered as a "side effect"[228] of studying the much broader art of "dialectic."[229] Dialectic, in turn, he defines as the art of making proper "divisions and collections"[230] of any given subject into the appropriate natural kinds, and ranging the various elements of that subject correctly under their true definitions and the true definitions of the kinds to which they

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[228] *Phaedrus* 274a1.

[229] *Phaedrus* 266c9.

[230] *Phaedrus* 266b3-4.

belong, so as to come to understand not only the true natures of the things being studied, but also of their relationships to one another.[231] This art, he argues, is required not only for coming to systematically and comprehensively understand the various types of souls and of speech, as the true rhetorician must, but for coming to systematically and comprehensively understand any subject at all. As an art of understanding, then, and not just of speech, dialectic, when practiced in speech, need not simply serve to impart to another information which the practitioner of the art already has. Rather, where rhetoric alone, at its very best, can serve only to convey knowledge (or perhaps even only true belief) from the rhetorician to the listener, dialectic can be used to *create* new knowledge, not only in an interlocutor, but in the dialectician himself. It is an art not only of speaking, Plato argues, but of *thinking* as well, and those who pursue it do so in order that they "may be able to think and to speak."[232]

Where dialectic is employed in the composition of speeches, then, Plato implies that it need not serve only to present a position upon which the composer of the speech has already decided. Rather, the reasoning employed in producing such a speech may itself be a means by which the truth of the matter is "discovered," or by which the dialectician and his audience together are "led" closer to discerning that truth.[233] The distinctive practice of this art, he argues, is first and foremost that of "seeing together things that are scattered about everywhere and collecting them into one kind, so that by

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[231] See *Phaedrus* 265d1-266c2.

[232] *Phaedrus* 266b4.

[233] See *Phaedrus* 266a.

defining each thing we can make clear the subject,"[234] while at the same time being careful "to cut up each kind according to its species along its natural joints, and... not to splinter any part, as a bad butcher might do."[235] Recall here, however, the claim which we saw Plato make at the very beginning of the palinode to love, that every human being 'must understand speech in terms of general forms, proceeding to bring many perceptions together into a reasoned unity,'[236] and that this "process is the recollection of the things our soul saw when it was traveling with god."[237] In light of this claim, the process of 'collection and division' which Plato describes for us here as the distinctive task of dialectic – bringing many scattered things together under the unifying definition of a single general kind, while carefully dividing up all such general kinds along their 'natural joints' until we "reach something indivisible"[238] – looks very much like a systematic way of engaging in just such a process of recollection. The art of dialectic, then, would be the art of systematically employing the resources provided to us by our natural ability to understand the 'general forms' required for the use of language in order to provoke further or more precise recollections of the corresponding general truths which our souls came to know in their travels with god. And if this is the essence of the art of dialectic, provoking recollection in the soul in this way through the systematic use of language,

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[234] *Phaedrus* 265d4-6.

[235] *Phaedrus* 265e1-3.

[236] See above, p. 9; *Phaedrus* 249b6-c2.

[237] *Phaedrus* 249c2-3.

[238] *Phaedrus* 277b8.

then it is in principle equally well suited to doing so either in the soul of the dialectician himself or in the souls of others.

Where the dialectician has applied his dialectic to achieve a systematic understanding of souls, then, that is, where he has become a true rhetorician as well, he will be able to employ his dialectic to provoke recollection not only in the souls of other people who are much like himself, and so likely to be moved towards recollection by the same sorts of uses of language which are likely to move him, but also in the souls of anyone with whom he is able to engage in speech. And from this, perhaps, we can begin to see at least one motivation for Socrates' rather puzzling condemnation of writing in the midst of Plato's own written work. Such a dialectician, as it seems we must take Socrates himself to be, will have a keen awareness of the inevitable limitations of even the best sort of writing: a written work, once committed to paper, is incapable of adapting itself to the souls of its individual readers, "it continues to signify just that very same thing forever.... reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not."[239] A living dialectician, on the other hand, in his role as a true rhetorician, can "determine which kind of speech is appropriate to each kind of soul... and offer a complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul and a simple speech to a simple one.... either in order to teach or in order to persuade."[240] And when a dialectician pursues his

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[239] *Phaedrus* 275d9-e4.

[240] *Phaedrus* 277b9-c1.

art for the right reasons, and practices it with the right goals in mind, in accordance with the right set of values, "so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible,"[241] realizing that "only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention,"[242] then he is rightly to be called "wisdom's lover – a philosopher."[243]

Plato implies very heavily, however, that this sort of philosophy, the practice of dialectic as a systematic art towards the end of pursuing wisdom for oneself and fostering its growth in others, is the province of the followers of Zeus. So, Socrates tells Phaedrus, in the course of the palinode, that "we were with Zeus, while others followed other gods,"[244] and concludes his description of the philosopher-dialectician with the claim that "such a man, Phaedrus, would be just what you and I both would pray to become."[245] And where he finds someone with a talent for dialectic, Socrates claims, he will "follow 'straight behind, in his tracks, as if he were a god.'"[246] But this, of course, is just the behavior which he has described in a lover who has seen his god's image in the soul of a prospective beloved. And where Socrates has seen an image of his god, he has seen an image of Zeus. When those who follow Zeus, then, 'choose someone to love who is a

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[241] *Phaedrus* 273e6-7.

[242] *Phaedrus* 278a3-6.

[243] *Phaedrus* 278d5.

[244] *Phaedrus* 250b6-7.

[245] *Phaedrus* 278b2-3.

[246] *Phaedrus* 266b6-7.

Zeus himself' insofar as he 'has a talent for philosophy and the guidance of others,'[247] it seems very plausible that the talent in question is an aptitude specifically for 'philosophy' as dialectic, and the corresponding gift for the 'guidance of others' which comes from its application to teaching other souls through the art of true rhetoric.

The philosophy, then, in which our 'philosophical pair' are engaged, at least in those cases where they are not themselves followers of Zeus, will not be the sort of philosophy as dialectic to which the Zeus-type souls are particularly suited, but rather, some other way of honoring and pursuing wisdom in their lives. And this dual usage of 'philosophy,' sometimes picking out a specific way of honoring and pursuing wisdom through the art of dialectic, and sometimes the much broader practice of honoring and pursuing wisdom in whatever way is suited to the nature of one's own particularly situated type of soul, can account for what might otherwise seem to be oddly conflicting claims within the palinode about what is required for a soul to regrow its wings. Having claimed, for example, that this prize is to be won both by loving philosophically and by practicing 'philosophy without guile,' Plato goes on, within less than a page, to claim that "only a philosopher's mind grows wings."[248] If this is not to be a contradiction, then, we must take it that practicing 'philosophy without guile,' that is, as we might now presume, employing the arts of dialectic and true rhetoric in the pursuit and teaching of truth, and loving philosophically are both ways of being a philosopher, since the souls of those who

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[247] See above, p. 18; *Phaedrus* 252e3-5.

[248] *Phaedrus* 249c5-6.

do both of these things will regrow their wings. And here, it seems, Plato's choice of Zeus as the god of the philosopher-dialecticians may be helpful to us in understanding the relationship between these two kinds of philosophy. The role of Zeus, in the palinode's description of the divine procession, is a universal, systematic task; he is charged with "looking after everything, and putting all things in order,"[249] while each of the other gods is occupied only with "seeing to his own work."[250] The dialectician then, in attempting to understand the world comprehensively and systematically, is emulating the distinctive way of life of his god, 'looking after everything, and putting all things in order' in his own mind, following the unchanging patterns provided by the perfectly real beings outside of heaven in order to do this correctly, just as Zeus himself does in the cosmos as a whole.[251] If this comprehensive systemization is the element of dialectic that belongs to the emulation of Zeus, then, what do we have left to say about the method by which the other types of souls pursue philosophy?

If what we have suggested above about the connection between dialectic and recollection is true, then it seems that dialectic is a systematic art of promoting recollection through the use of the resources provided to all of us by our shared human capacity to understand language. It is a systematic art, then, of promoting recollection through the use of language, either in private thought, or in speaking with others. And

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[249] *Phaedrus* 246e5-6.

[250] *Phaedrus* 247a6.

[251] This is my own, somewhat speculative, interpretation of the significance of Zeus's role as the god of the philosopher-dialecticians in this particular context, given the way in which Plato has chosen to characterize Zeus in the allegorical myth of the palinode. Should this interpretation prove unconvincing, however, the remainder of the argument is intended to stand on its own.

the way in which such recollection is best promoted for any given soul, it seems, will depend upon the type of soul which it is, both in terms of its unchanging, divine, type, and its degree of accomplishment with respect to understanding and virtue. In their experience of love, however, Plato has argued that our lovers have become 'well equipped' for finding ways of promoting such recollections in themselves in the process of pursuing ever greater emulation of their own particular god. And, since the progress of their love has ensured that they will share a common type of soul, both in terms of divine type, and in terms of their general degree of accomplishment in virtue and in understanding, the ways in which recollection will be best promoted for each of them will be very much the same. In their interactions and conversations with one another over the course of their shared life, then, the philosophical friends will be uniquely positioned, as well as motivated, to create new knowledge for themselves and one another in just that way in which the dialectician is able to do with any given soul whom he may meet,[252] by engaging together in those uses of language which are most suited to promote recollection in souls of the type which they share. Where the philosopher-dialectician's ability to engage in such collaborative creation of knowledge through "discourse"[253] with

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[252] Or, perhaps, at least, any sufficiently accomplished soul he may meet. The philosopher dialectician may not be able to engage in the collaborative creation of new knowledge with souls who are drastically less knowledgable and skilled than he is, and may be restricted in his conversations with them to guiding them towards the recognition of truths with which he himself is already very familiar, in his role as a true rhetorician. Indeed, one might plausibly read Socrates' engagement with Phaedrus in the dialogue as a whole as an example of just such rhetorical guidance of a less accomplished soul towards greater understanding and pursuit of the truth by a philosopher-dialectician in his role as a practitioner of true rhetoric.

[253] *Phaedrus* 278a7 etc; c.f. 259d6, where "discourse" is picked out as the distinctive domain of the Muses who preside over philosophy.

any type of soul depends upon his systematic, universal, understanding of the natures, and therefore the needs, of all of the various types of soul, then, the best kind of friend's ability to engage in this same activity of collaboratively creating knowledge depends instead upon his particular, personal, understanding of the natures, and therefore the needs, of his and his friend's own souls.

Conclusion: A Philosophical Life

If this reading of the *Phaedrus* proves a convincing one, then, Plato has provided us, here, not only with an account of the best kinds of friendship which anticipates many of the most compelling features of Aristotle's much more celebrated account, but also with an intriguing picture of the importance of both personal love and personal friendship to the practice of philosophy. The kind of philosophy which we are accustomed to associating with Plato, the rigorous, systematic, dialectical investigation of someone like a Socrates, is on this account a way of loving wisdom to which only a very specific sort of soul is naturally inclined. Any other sort of soul, however, if sufficiently virtuous, is nevertheless equally capable of pursuing and honoring wisdom in that way to which its own type is naturally best suited, through the opportunity afforded by the powerful ability of interpersonal love and friendship to alter the course of our lives. Personal eros and the enduring personal *philia* it creates when correctly pursued can, on this picture, offer any one of us a way, through a shared lifelong passion for the perfect and true and collaborative pursuit of ever greater virtue and knowledge, of "leading a philosophical life."[254]

[254] *Phaedrus* 259d8.

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